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Perkins was speeding for second.

(See page 171.)

WEATHERBY'S INNING

A Story of College Life and Baseball

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF BEHIND THE LINE
THE HALF-BACK, ETC.

Illustrated by C. M. Relyea

New York
D. Appleton and Company
1906

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Published September, 1903

TO

ALFRED LOUIS BAURY

AGED ELEVEN

YOUNGEST AND MOST LENIENT

OF CRITICS

156742

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WEATHERBY'S INNING

CHAPTER I

COWARD!

UNIVERSITY BASEBALL.—All men who wish to try for the team report in the cage on Monday, February 25th, at 3.30 sharp.

JOS. L. PERKINS, *Capt.*

Jack Weatherby, on his way out of the gymnasium, paused before the bulletin-board in the little drafty hall and read the call.

"That's next Monday," he muttered. "All right, I'll be there."

Then, putting a shoulder against the big oak door, he pushed his way out on to the granite steps and stood there a moment in scowling contemplation of the cheerless scene. Before him the board-walk was almost afloat in a shallow rivulet of melted snow that filled the gravel-path from side to side. A few steps away the path ended at the Washington Street gate in a veritable lake. The crossing was inches deep in water

and the Common was a dismal waste of pools and streams out of which the soldiers' monument reared itself as though agonizedly searching for a dry spot to which to move. There was an incessant and monotonous dripping and trickling and gurgling as the snow, which two days before had covered the ground to a depth of over a foot, disappeared as by magic under the breath of an unseasonable south wind. The sky was leaden and lowering, and against it the bare branches of the numberless elm-trees swayed complainingly. The Common and so much of the college grounds as was in sight were deserted. Altogether it was a dispiriting prospect that met Jack's eyes, and one little likely to aid him in the task of fighting the "blues," which had oppressed him all day.

He went listlessly down the steps, heroically striving to whistle a tune. But the tune had died out ere the sidewalk was reached. He looked with misgiving from the crossing to his shoes—shoes which even when new had been scarcely adapted to wet weather—and after a moment of hesitation gave up the idea of taking the usual short cut across the Common, and went on down Washington Street. As he began to pick his way gingerly across the wet pavement at the corner of Elm Street, two men ran down the steps of a boarding-house. They were talking in high, excited tones, and

Jack could hear them until they had gone some distance toward the railroad.

"The water's away up to the road, they say," one of them declared loudly, "and it's still rising. They're afraid the bridge'll go. There's a lot of ice coming down."

"Should think it might go," said the other. "The old thing looks as though you could push it over if you tried."

"Yes, don't it? Let's get a move on. We had a flood once up home that——"

Then a heavy gust of wind, sweeping around the corner of the tumble-down livery-stable, drowned the conversation. Jack paused and silently weighed the respective attractions of a dark and not overcomfortable room in the green-shuttered house a few steps away, and a swollen river which might, if there was any such thing as good luck—which he had begun to doubt—sweep away the tottering old wooden bridge. Well, his feet were already wet, and so— He retraced his steps to the corner and went on down Washington Street in the wake of the others. They were a block or so ahead, splashing their thick boots through all kinds of puddles. They were evidently the best of friends, for one kept his hand on the other's shoulder. Once the prankish wind bore a scrap of merry laughter

up the street, and Jack, plodding along behind, wary of puddles, as befits a fellow who is wearing his only pair of winter shoes, heard it and felt gloomier and more forlorn than ever.

He wondered what it was like to have real friends and a chum; to be well known and liked. He had come to Erskine College in September fully expecting such things to fall to his share. But he had been there five months now and during that time his life had been very lonely. At first he had tried to make friends in a diffident way. Perhaps he had tried with the wrong men; perhaps his manner had been against him; the result had been discouraging, and after a while, smarting under what to his oversensitive feelings seemed rebuffs, he had ceased looking for friends and had retired into a shell of pessimism and injured pride, masking his loneliness under simulated indifference. Since then he had undoubtedly lost many a chance to find the companionship he craved; but he had learned his lesson, he told himself bitterly, and so he rejected advances as though they were the deadliest of insults.

He didn't look the least bit like a misanthrope. He was seventeen years old, large for his age, lithe, muscular and healthy-looking, as is proper in a boy who has never been pampered, with a face which even at the present moment, in spite of the expression of

settled bitterness that marred it, was eminently attractive. His eyes were well apart and gray in color; his hair was light brown, and his mouth, which of late had formed the unfortunate habit of wearing a little supercilious sneer in public, looked generous and honest, and, with the firmly rounded chin beneath, suggested force and capability. On the whole he was a clean-cut, manly-looking boy to whom fortune, you would have said, owed much.

When Jack Weatherby reached the river he found that the report of its depredations was not exaggerated. To be sure, River Street was still above water, but the flood was well over the bank in places, and farther along, in front of the coal-yards, several of the wharves were awash. The broad stream, usually a quiet, even sluggish body, was sending up a new sound, a low, threatening roar which, without his having realized it, had reached Jack's ears long before he had sighted the river.

He wormed his way through the crowd of townfolk that lined the street, and, passing through an empty coal-pocket, found himself on a spray-drenched string-piece a foot above the water. To his right and left piers ran some distance into the river. They were untenanted. But beyond them the open spaces used by the coal company as storage ground for wagons were

black with watchers. A short way off was the bridge, a low, wooden structure connecting Centerport with the little village of Kirkplain across the river. Jack was on the up-stream side of the bridge and could see the havoc that the drifting ice was making with the worn spiling and hear the crashing and grinding as cake after cake was hurled and jammed against it. Several of the supports were already broken, and the entrance to the bridge was barred with a rope and guarded by a member of Centerport's small police force.

Jack drew back as far as he could from the edge of the beam and with his shoulders against the boards of the big bin watched in strange fascination the black, angry water rushing past. It frightened and repelled him, and yet he found it difficult to remove his gaze. For as long as he could remember he had been afraid of water. Once, when he was only five years old, he had fallen into the brook that crossed his father's farm and had almost drowned before his mother, hastening after the runaway, had dragged him out. His recollection of the escapade was very hazy, but it had left him with a dread of water that was almost a mania. All efforts to combat it had proved futile. He had never learned to swim, and had never in all his life trusted himself in a boat. And yet, as a boy, he had devoured ravenously all the stories of the sea he could

lay hands on, and had shuddered over shipwrecks and similar disasters, at once repelled and fascinated.

Suddenly his contemplation of the river was disturbed by shouts of alarm from up-stream. With an effort he withdrew his gaze from the water and looked in the direction of the cries. At that instant, around the corner of the pier to his right, floated something that thrashed the water wildly and sent up shrill appeals for help. After the first second of bewilderment Jack saw that it was a boy of thirteen or fourteen years. The white face, horribly drawn with terror, turned toward him, and, for an instant, the frightened, staring eyes looked into his. Jack sickened and groped blindly for support. A trick of the current shot the struggling body into the little harbor afforded by the two piers, almost at his feet. In his ears was a meaningless babel of shouts and in his heart an awful fear. He leaned back with outstretched hands clinging to the planks behind him and closed his eyes to avoid the sight of the appealing face below. Then, with a gasp, he sank to his knees, seized the string-piece with one hand, and with the other reached downward. But he was too late. The current, sweeping out again, had already borne the boy beyond reach. There was a final despairing shriek, then the arms ceased to struggle and the eddies closed over the body. Jack joined his voice

impotently with the others and looked wildly about for a plank or a rope—anything that he could throw into the water. But there was nothing. Sick and dizzy he subsided against the timbers.

Then, just at the corner of the down-stream wharf, the body came to the surface again, the eyes sightless, the lips silent. And, almost too late, came help.

Jack, leaning near the opening in the coal-bin, felt rather than saw some one push by him. The rescuer, a man several years Jack's senior, had discarded his coat and vest, and now, stooping and placing a hand lightly on the string-piece, he dropped into the water. A half dozen strokes took him to the end of the pier, and just as the drowning boy was again sinking he caught him. Turning, he struck out toward Jack, swimming desperately against the swirling current. For a minute it was difficult work; then he reached stiller water, and Jack, leaning over the edge, stretched forth eager hands to help. But ere he could do so he was pushed aside, narrowly saving himself from pitching head foremost into the water, and a middle-aged man, whom Jack a moment later saw to be Professor White, relieved the rescuer of his burden.

By that time the narrow foothold along the edge of the river was thronged with students and townfolk.

Quickly the apparently lifeless body was borne past them through the yard and into a small office. Jack, trembling in every limb, followed. But near the door he suddenly became aware of a hostile atmosphere. The crowd, which had grown every minute, were observing him curiously, contemptuously, muttering and whispering. The blood rushed into his face and then receded, leaving it deathly pale. For a moment he faced them. Then a small boy somewhere on the edge of the throng sent up a shrill cry:

"That's him! That's the feller that didn't make no try ter save him! 'Fraid of wettin' his feet, he was!"

Jack looked about him and read in the faces that confronted him only merciless condemnation. Something in his throat hurt him and refused to be dislodged. With head up he turned and made his way through the crowd, the old sneer on his lips. But there was worse in store. He felt a hand on his shoulder and turned to find Professor White beside him.

"What's your name?" asked the professor sternly.

"Weatherby, sir," muttered Jack.

"Are you a student?"

"Yes, sir."

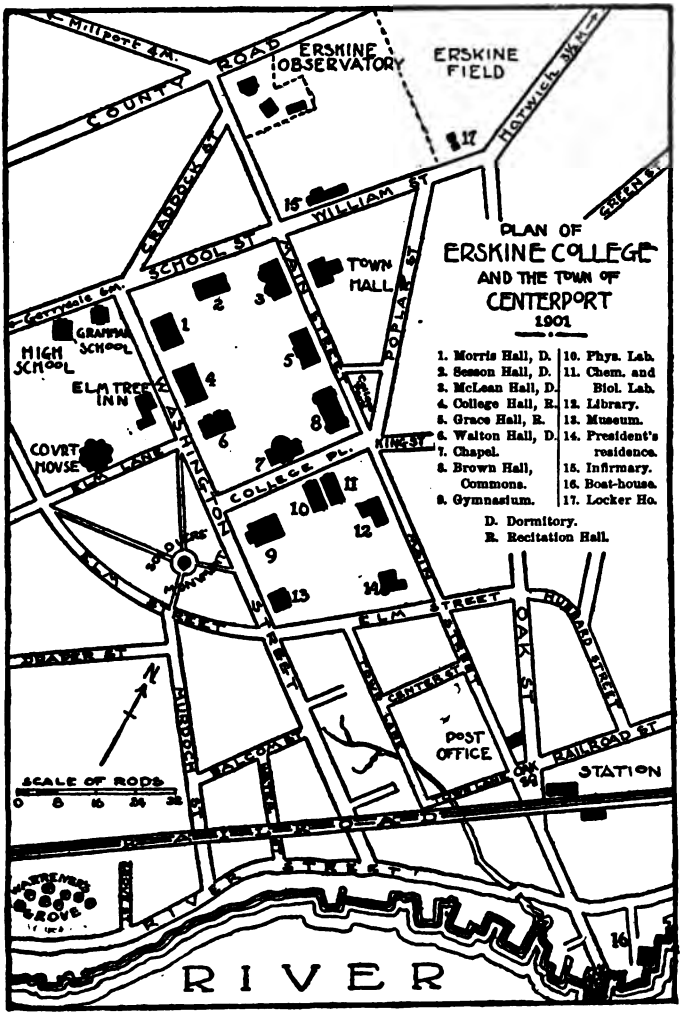
"What class?"

"Six."

The professor looked at him searchingly, then dropped the hand from his shoulder.

"I find that hard to believe," he said contemptuously. "I didn't think we had any cowards here at Erskine!"

He turned away, and Jack, after a moment of hesitation, a moment in which his first inclination to protest against the injustice of the verdict was drowned in a sudden dumbing surge of anger, made his way out of the throng and stumbled back to his room through the gathering twilight.


PLAN OF
ERSKINE COLLEGE
AND THE TOWN OF
CENTERPORT
1901
1. Morris Hall, D.
2. Sesson Hall, D.
3. McLean Hall, D.
4. College Hall, R.
5. Grace Hall, R.
6. Walton Hall, D.
7. Chapel.
8. Brown Hall, Commons.
9. Gymnasium.
10. Phys. Lab.
11. Chem. and Biol. Lab.
12. Library.
13. Museum.
14. President's residence.
15. Infirmary.
16. Boat-house.
17. Locker Ho.
D. Dormitory.
R. Recitation Hall.
ERSKINE OBSERVATORY
ERSKINE FIELD
COUNTY ROAD
Millport 4 M.
Hatwich 3½ M.
CRADDOCK ST
WILLIAM ST
SCHOOL ST
GREEN ST
TOWN HALL
POPLAR ST
Gerrydale 6 M.
GRAMMAR SCHOOL
HIGH SCHOOL
ELM TREE INN
COVRT HOUSE
ELM LANE
WASHINGTON STREET
COLLEGE PL.
KING ST
ELM STREET
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DRAPER ST
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RIVER STREET
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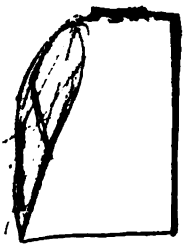

CHAPTER II

AN INTERRUPTION

Erskine College, at Centerport, is not large. Like many another New England college its importance lies rather in its works than in wealth or magnificence. Its enrolment in all departments at the time of which I write was about 600. I am not going to describe the college, it would take too long; and besides, it has been done very frequently and very well, and if the reader, after studying the accompanying plan, which is reproduced with the kind permission of the authorities, feels the need of further description, I would respectfully refer him to Balcom's Handbook of Erskine (photographically illustrated) and May's History of Erskine College. And if in connection with these he examines the annual catalogue he will know about all there is to be known of the subject.

Leaving Washington Street and going west on Elm Street, he will find, facing the apex of the Common, a small white frame cottage profusely adorned with

blinds of a most vivid green. That is Mrs. Dorlon's. It is by far the tiniest of the many boarding- and lodging-houses that line the outer curve of Elm Street, and, as might be supposed, its rooms are few and not commodious. Mrs. Dorlon, a small, middle-aged widow, with a perpetual cold in the head, reserves the lower floor for her own use and rents the two up-stairs rooms to students. Between these second-floor apartments there is little to choose. The western one gets the afternoon sunlight, while the one on the other side of the hall gets none. To make up for this, however, the eastern room is, or was, at the time of my story, the proud possessor of a register, supposed, somewhat erroneously, to conduct warm air into the apartment; while the western room, to use the language of Mrs. Dorlon, was "het by gas."

Aside from these differences, apparent rather than real, the two chambers were similar. In each there was a strip of narrow territory in which it was possible to stand upright, flanked on either side by abruptly sloping ceilings whose flaking expanses were broken by dormer-windows, admitting a little light and a deal of cold. It was the eastern room that Jack Weatherby at present called home, a feat which implied the possession of a great deal of imagination on his part. For when, having escaped the hostile throng by the river

and made his way up Washington into Elm Street, and so to the house with the painfully green blinds, the room in which he found himself didn't look the least bit in the world like home.

The iron cot-bed, despite its vivid imitation Bagdad covering, failed to deceive the beholder into mistaking it for a Turkish divan. The faded and threadbare ingrain carpet, much too small to cover the floor, was of a chilly, inhospitable shade of blue. The occupant had made little attempt at decoration, partly because the amount of wall space adapted to pictures was extremely limited, partly because from the first the cheerless ugliness of the room discouraged him. The green-topped study table near the end window was a sorry piece of furniture. Former users had carved cabalistic designs into the walnut rim and adorned the imitation leather covering with even more mysterious figures; there were evidences, too, of overturned ink-bottles. A yellow-grained wardrobe beside the door leaned wearily against the supporting angle of the ceiling.

The brightest note in the room was a patent rocker upholstered in vivid green and yellow Brussels carpet. If we except a walnut book-shelf hanging beside the end window and a wash-stand jammed under one dormer, the enumeration of the furnishings is complete. Even on days when the sun shone against the white gable of

the next house, the apartment could scarcely be called cheerful, and this afternoon with the evening shadows closing down and the wind whipping the branches of the elms outside and buffeting the house until it creaked complainingly, the room was forlorn to a degree.

After slamming the door behind him Jack tossed aside his cap, and subsiding into the rocker stretched his legs and stared miserably through the window into a swaying world of gray branches and darkening sky. The overmastering anger that had sent him striding home as though pursued dwindled away and left in its place a loneliness and discouragement that hurt like a physical pain. Things had been bad before, he thought, but now, branded in public a coward and despised by his fellows, life would be unbearable! He pictured the glances of contempt that would meet him on the morrow in hall and yard, or wherever he went, and groaned. He recalled the professor's biting words: "I didn't think we had any cowards here at Erskine!" and clenched his hands in sudden overmastering rage. The injustice of it maddened him. Would Professor White, he asked himself, have gone into the river after the drowning boy if, like himself, he were unable to swim a stroke and sickened at the mere thought of contact with the icy flood?

Presently his thoughts reverted to the morrow and

the punishment he must undergo. His courage faltered, and the alternative, that of packing his few things there and then and leaving college by an early train in the morning, seemed the only course possible. Well, he would do it. It would mean disappointment to his parents and a loss of money they could ill afford. To him it would mean five months of study wasted. But better that than staying on there despised and ridiculed, to be pointed out behind his back as The Coward.

With a gasp he leaped to his feet, his cheeks tingling and his eyes moist with sudden tears. The room was in darkness. He fumbled over the desk until he found the match-box. When the gas was lighted he remembered the condition of his feet, and drawing a chair before the register he removed his wet shoes and placed them against the warm grating that they might dry overnight. His battered silver watch showed the time to be a few minutes before six. He found dry socks, and drawing them over his chilled feet donned a pair of carpet slippers. Then he washed for supper, bathing his flushed face over and over, and got back into his coat just as a weak-voiced bell below summoned the small household to the evening meal. As he went out he noted with surprise that the door of the opposite room was ajar, allowing a streak of light to illumine the upper

hall with unaccustomed radiance. The room had been vacant all the year, but now, evidently, Mrs. Dorlon had found a tenant. But the fact interested him little, for his mind was firmly made up, and on the morrow his own room would be for rent.

When he entered the tiny dining-room Mrs. Dorlon and her daughter, a shy wisp of a girl some twelve or thirteen years of age, were already seated at the table. Jack muttered greetings and applied himself silently to the cold meat and graham bread which, with crab-apple jelly and weak tea, comprised the meal. But his hostess was plainly elated, and after a few pregnant snuffles the secret was out. The western chamber was rented!

"And such a nice, pleasant-mannered young man he is," she declared. "A Mr. Tidball, a junior. Perhaps you have met him?"

Jack shook his head.

"Well, I'm sure you'll like him, and it'll be real pleasant for you to have another student in the house. I know what it is to be alone"—she sniffed sadly—"since Mr. Dorlon died, and I guess you feel downright lonely sometimes up there. If you like I'll introduce Mr. Tidball after supper?"

The widow appeared to find a mild excitement at the thought, and her face fell when Jack begged off. "Not

this evening, please," he said. "I'm going to be very busy, Mrs. Dorlon."

"Oh, very well. I only thought—" What she thought he never knew, for excusing himself he pushed back his chair and returned to his room. As he closed his door he heard the new lodger whistling cheerfully and tunelessly across the hallway.

He dragged a steamer trunk from under the bed, threw back the lid and unceremoniously hustled the contents on to the floor. Then he took a valise from the wardrobe and proceeded to pack into it what few belongings would serve him until he could send for his trunk. The latter he couldn't take with him. In the first place, there was no way of getting it to the depot in time for the early train; in the second place, as he was not now able to pay Mrs. Dorlon the present month's rent, he felt that he ought to leave something behind him as security. The prospect of going home raised his spirits, and he felt happier than he had for many months. He even hummed an air as he tramped busily between the wardrobe and the trunk, and the result was that the first knock on the door passed unheeded. After a moment the knock was repeated, and this time Jack heard it and paused in the act of spreading his Sunday trousers in the till and looked the consternation he felt. Who was it, he wondered. Per-

haps Mrs. Dorlon come to hint about the rent; perhaps—but whoever it might be, Jack didn't want his preparations seen. He softly closed the trunk lid and wished that he had locked the door. He waited silently. Perhaps the caller would go away. Then, as he began to think with relief that this had already happened, the knob turned, the door swung open, and a lean, spectacled face peered through the opening.

"I thought maybe you didn't hear me knock," said a queer, drawling voice. "I've taken the room across the way, and as we're going to be neighbors I thought I'd just step over and get acquainted."

The caller came in and closed the door behind him, casting an interested look about the shabby apartment. Jack, after an instant of surprise and dismay, muttered a few words of embarrassed greeting. As he did so he recognized in the odd, lanky figure at the door the hero of the accident at the river.

CHAPTER III

MR. TIDBALL INTRODUCES HIMSELF

THE caller looked to be about twenty-one or two years of age. He was tall, thin, and angular, and carried himself awkwardly. His shoulders had the stoop that tells of much poring over books. His hands and feet were large, the former knotted and ungainly. His face was lean, the cheeks somewhat sunken; the nose was large and well-shapen and the mouth, altogether too broad, looked good-natured and humorous. He wore steel-rimmed spectacles, behind which twinkled a pair of small, pale-blue eyes, kindly and shrewd. His clothes seemed at first sight to belong to some one very much larger; the trousers hung in baggy folds about his legs and his coat went down behind his neck exposing at least an inch of checkered gingham shirt.

And yet, despite the incongruity of his appearance, he impressed Jack as being a person of importance, a man who knew things and who was capable of turning

his knowledge to good account. Tidball? Where had he heard the name of Tidball? As he thought of it now, the name seemed strangely familiar. Recollecting his duties as host, Jack pushed forward the patent rocker.

"Won't you sit down?" he asked.

The visitor sank into the chair, bringing one big foot, loosely encased in a frayed leather slipper, on to one knee, and clasping it with both knotted hands quite as though he feared it might walk off when he wasn't looking.

"Queer sort of weather we're having," he drawled. He talked through his nose with a twang that proclaimed him a native of the coast. Jack concurred, sitting uncomfortably on the edge of the cot and wondering whether Tidball recognized him.

"Mrs. Thingamabob down-stairs said you were from Maine. Maine's my State. I come from Jonesboro; ever hear of Jonesboro?"

"No, I don't believe so." The visitor chuckled.

"Never met any one who had. Guess I'm about the only resident of that metropolis who ever strayed out of it. There's one fellow in our town, though, who went down to Portland once about forty years back. He's looked on as quite a traveler in Jonesboro."

Jack smiled. "My folks live near Auburn," he said.

"Nice place, Auburn. By the way, my name's Tidball—Anthony Z. Z stands for Zeno; guess I'm a sort of a Stoic myself." The remark was lost on Jack, whose acquaintance with the Greek philosophers was still limited.

"My name's Weatherby," he returned. "My first name's Jack; I haven't any middle name."

"You're lucky," answered the other. "They might have called you Xenophanes, you see." Jack didn't see, but he smiled doubtfully, and the visitor went on. "Well, now we know each other. We're the only fellows in the hut and we might as well get together, eh? Guess I saw you this afternoon down at the river, didn't I?"

Jack flushed and nodded.

"Thought so." There was a moment's silence, during which the visitor's shrewd eyes studied Jack openly and calmly and during which all the old misery, forgotten for the moment, came back to the boy. Then—

"Guess you can't swim, eh?" asked the other.

"No, not a stroke," muttered Jack.

"Thought so," reiterated Tidball. There was another silence. Then Jack said, with an uneasy laugh:

"There's no doubt but that you can, though."

"Me? Yes, I can swim like a shark. Down in

Jonesboro we learn when we're a year old. Comes natural to us coasters."

"It was lucky you were there this afternoon," said Jack.

"Oh, some one else would have gone in, I guess!"

"He—he didn't—he wasn't drowned, was he?"

"The kid? No, but plaguy near it. He's all right now, I guess. Teach him a lesson."

"Did the bridge go?" asked Jack after a moment, merely to break another silence.

"No, water was going down when I left. Guess I'm in the way, though, ain't I?"

"In the way?"

"Yes; weren't you doing something when I came in? Packing a trunk or something?"

"Oh, it—it doesn't matter; there's no hurry."

"Going home over Sunday?"

"Y—yes."

"You're lucky; wish I was. But don't let me interrupt; go ahead and I'll just sit here out of the way, if you don't mind my staying."

"Not at all; I—I'm glad to have you." And the odd thing about it, as Jack realized the next moment, was that he meant what he said. The visitor drew a little brier pipe from one pocket and a pouch from another.

"Smoke?" he asked.

"No," answered Jack.

"Mind if I do?"

"Not a bit." Tidball stuffed the bowl with tobacco and was soon sending long clouds of rankly smelling smoke into the air.

"Don't begin," he advised. "It's a mean habit; wastes time and money and doesn't do you any good after all. Wish I didn't."

"But couldn't you break yourself of it?" asked Jack.

Tidball chuckled again and blew a great mouthful of gray smoke toward the gaslight.

"Don't want to," he answered.

"Oh!" said Jack, puzzled.

"Going to take your trunk?" asked the other, waving his pipe toward it.

"No, just a bag. I'll send for the trunk later." Then, as he realized his mistake, the blood rushed into his cheeks. He looked up at Tidball and found that person eying him quizzically. "I—I mean—that——"

"No harm done," interrupted the visitor. "Thought when I came in you meant to cut and run. Why?"

"Because—because I can't stay," answered Jack

defiantly. "You—you were there and you saw it. Everybody thinks I'm a coward! Professor White said—said—" He choked and looked down miserably at his twisting fingers.

"Well, you aren't, are you?"

Jack glanced up startledly.

"Why—why—no, I'm not a coward!" he cried.

"Didn't think you were. You don't look it."

Jack experienced a grateful warmth at the heart and looked shyly and thankfully at the queer, lean face across the room.

"But—but they all think I am," he muttered.

"I wouldn't prove them right, then, if I were you."

"Prove— What do you mean?"

"Mean I wouldn't run away; mean I'd stay and fight it out. Any one can run; takes a brave man to stand and fight."

"Oh!" Jack stared wonderingly at Tidball. "I hadn't thought of that."

"'Tisn't too late."

"N—no," answered Jack doubtfully. "You—think I ought to stay?"

"Yes, I honestly do, Weatherby. You've got nothing to be ashamed of; 'twouldn't have done any good if you'd gone into the river; guess you'd been

drowned—'tother chap, too. White jumped at conclusions and landed wrong. Can't much blame him, though. You see, the fellows here at Erskine come from the country, or the coast, or some small town, and swimming's as natural as eating, and I guess it didn't occur to them that maybe you couldn't swim. But when they learn the truth of the matter——"

"But they won't know," said Jack.

"Bound to. I'll see White myself, and I'll tell all the chaps I know; 'twon't take long for the facts to get around."

"I'd rather you didn't, if you don't mind," said Jack. "It's awfully kind of you——"

"Didn't what?"

"See Professor White."

"Well—of course, I know you're feeling kind of sore at him, Weatherby, and I don't much blame you; still, there's no use in allowing the misunderstanding to continue when a word or two will set things right."

"I don't care what he thinks," said Jack, bitterly.

"All right," replied Tidball calmly. "How about the others?"

Jack studied his hands in silence for a minute. Then he threw back his shoulders and got up.

"You're mighty kind," he said, "to want to take all this trouble on my account, and I'm awfully much

obliged to you, but—if you don't mind—I'd rather you didn't say anything to anybody."

Tidball frowned.

"Then you mean to run away?" he asked disappointedly.

"No, I'll stay and—and fight! Let them think me a coward if they like; only some day I'll show them I'm not!"

"That's the stuff," said the other approvingly. "I guess you're making a mistake by not explaining, but—maybe you'll change your mind. If you do, let me know."

"Thanks," answered Jack, "but I sha'n't." He took up his valise and holding it upside down emptied the contents on to the cot. "I wish you'd tell me one thing," he said.

"All right."

"Did you—I mean— Well, did you just happen to come in, or—did you know I was—The Coward?"

"Well," drawled the other, smiling gently at a cloud of smoke, "Mrs. Thingamabob told me yesterday when I engaged that room that she had a very nice young man, a freshman named Weatherby, living with her. The name isn't common, I guess, and so when I heard it again down at the wharf I remembered. And

I just thought I'd come in and see what silly thing you'd decided to do. Kind of cheeky, I guess, but that's my way. Hope you're not offended?"

"No, I'm awfully glad. If you hadn't come I'd have gone away, sure as anything."

"Glad I came. Hope we'll be friends. You must come over and see me. You won't find things very palatial in my place, but there's an extra chair, I think. I don't go in much for luxuries. I was rooming in a place on Main Street until to-day; very comfortable place it was, too: folding-bed, lounge, rocking-chair, and a study desk with real drawers that locked—at least, some of them did. My roommate was a fellow named Gooch, from up my way. His father died a week or so ago, and yesterday I got a letter from him saying he'd have to leave college and buckle down to work. Couldn't afford to keep the room alone, so I looked round and found this. Well, I must be going."

He pulled his long length out of the chair, and, producing from a chamois pouch a handsome big gold watch, oddly at variance with his shabby attire, held it nearsightedly to the dim light.

"Don't be in a hurry," begged Jack. And then, "That's a dandy watch you have," he added. "May I see it?"

"Yes," answered Tidball, holding it forth at the length of its chain, "it's the only swell thing I own. It's a present."

"Oh!" said Jack. "Well, it's a beauty. And it's got a split-second attachment, too, hasn't it?"

"Yes, and when you press this thing here it strikes the time; hear it? Guess it cost a heap of money."

"It must have. Was it a prize?"

"Something like that. A New York fellow gave it to me summer before last. He came up to Jonesboro in a steam-yacht about a thousand feet long. Well, I've got a lot of studying to do yet." He moved toward the door.

"But why did he give it to you?" asked Jack. "But maybe I'm asking impertinent questions?"

"Oh, no; there's no secret about it, only— Well, you see, this steam-yacht man had his son with him, a kid of about eleven or twelve, I guess, and one day the kid fell out of the naphtha-launch. There was a good sea running, and they couldn't get the launch about very well. I happened to be near there in a dory, and so I picked the youngster up. His daddy seemed a good deal tickled about it, and after he got home he sent this to me. That's all. Some people seem to have money to burn. Well, good night. Glad to

have met you. Come over and call as soon as you can."

And Anthony Z. Tidball nodded, blew a parting cloud of smoke in Jack's direction, and went out, closing the door softly behind him.

CHAPTER IV

CATCHER AND PITCHER

"WELL, it wasn't such a bad showing, was it?"

Joe Perkins tossed his purple cap adorned with a white E on to the table and threw himself among the cushions of the window-seat in the manner of one who has earned his rest. He was a jovial-looking fellow of medium height, rather inclined toward stoutness. His hair was undeniably red, and despite that his features were good, none would have called him handsome. But his blue eyes were alert and his mouth firm. He had the quick temper popularly believed to accompany red hair, but it was well under control, and Joe's usual appearance was one of extreme good nature. He was popular, perhaps the most popular fellow in college, and he knew it, and was not spoiled by the knowledge. His friends believed in him and he believed in himself. Perhaps it was the latter fact that made him such a wonderful leader. Ever since his freshman year he had been among the foremost in all college affairs. Last

spring, after the disastrous 7—0 baseball game with Robinson, the selection of Joe, whose catching had been a feature of the contest, as captain, was unanimous and enthusiastic, and the supporters of the Purple, mourning overwhelming defeat, felt their sorrow lightened by the knowledge that Joe Perkins, in accepting the office, had pledged himself to retrieve Erskine's lost prestige on the diamond. The whole college firmly believed that what Joe Perkins promised he would perform.

Joe's companion was Tracy Gilberth. Like Joe, he was a senior and a member of the nine. Unlike Joe, he did not impress one as being particularly good-natured; nor did he resemble that youth in appearance. He had straight dark hair and black eyes. His cheeks were ruddy and his mouth straight and thin. He was of middle height and weight, and pitched the best ball of any man in college. In age he was a year Joe's senior, being twenty-three. He had none of the other man's popularity, although he was not disliked. Acquaintances suspected him of arrogance; in talking he had a tone that sounded patronizing to those not used to it. His parents were immensely wealthy; rumor credited his father with being a millionaire several times over. At all events, Tracy had the most luxuriously furnished rooms at Erskine, and spent more money than the rest of his class put together.

At the present moment he was sitting in Joe's Morris chair with his hands in his pockets and his golf-stockinged legs sprawled before him. He replied to Joe's question with a negligent nod that might have meant either assent or denial. Joe took it to express the former, and continued:

"A heap better than last year, anyhow. Thirty candidates at this time of year means sixty when we get outdoors."

"Yes, but it isn't quantity that counts, Joe," said Tracy. "Look at the sort of greenies you had to-day. I'll bet there isn't a decent player among them, outside of the few last-year men that were there. If I were captain I'd rather have fifteen good players than fifty would-bes."

"You're an awful croaker, Tracy. For goodness' sake, let me be happy while I can. To-morrow I shall be quite ready to believe that to-day's bunch is merely a lot of hopeless idiots; but this evening I am an optimist; I see phenomenal pitchers, star catchers, wonderful first-basemen, in short, an aggregation of brilliant players destined to wipe Robinson off the face of the earth. Leave me to my dreams, old man."

"All right; only when you wake up you'll find you've fallen out of bed," answered Tracy. "Have you heard from Hanson?"

"Yes, he's coming up Wednesday to look around."

"I hope he'll like what he sees," said Tracy, grimly. "I suppose you saw that fellow Weatherby there to-day? That chap must have the sensibilities of a goat. Think of his having the cheek to show up in the cage as a baseball candidate after what happened Friday! Why, if I were he I wouldn't have the courage to show my face outside of my room. Not a fellow spoke to him to-day, but he didn't seem to mind a bit."

"I spoke to him," said Joe.

"Oh, you had to!"

"And I think you're mistaken about his not caring. He kept a pretty stiff upper lip, but I have a hunch that he wasn't happy."

"Happy! I should say not. If he expects to be happy as long as he stays at Erskine he's going to be awfully fooled. The chap ought to be driven out of college."

"It's an unfortunate affair," answered Joe dispassionately, "and I don't pretend to understand it. But I must confess that I'm a bit sorry for the chap. It may just be that there was some reason for his not going in after that boy. Maybe he got rattled; you can't tell."

"Oh, poppycock! Maybe he was blind or asleep!

Why didn't he spunk up, then, and say something? He just walked off with his head in the air, as proud as you please, without a word. The plain fact of the matter is that he's a coward clean through."

"Well—but if he is, why did he report to-day? Seems to me that took something a good deal like courage. He knows plaguy well what the college thinks of him. Great Scott, if I had been in his boots I'd no more have thought of coming there among all those fellows——!"

"That's what I say. He's got just about the same sensibilities as a billy-goat. I dare say he's rather proud of himself. But don't you worry, Joe, you won't be troubled with him long; we'll soon show him that the baseball team doesn't want cowards. You leave him to us, old man."

"No, you don't, Tracy; you leave him to me. I'm bossing this outfit, and I'm quite capable of getting rid of any one I don't want. The fellow says he can play ball, and it's fellows who can play ball that I'm after, and not life-saving heroes."

Tracy stared across at his friend in disgust.

"Well, I can tell you one thing, Joe, and that is that you'll find that there will be lots of fellows who simply won't go on to the team if you keep Weatherby; and one of 'em's me!"

"Nonsense," answered the other, quite undisturbed. "Your precious morals aren't going to be hurt by playing on the same acre of green grass as Weatherby. Nor by sitting at the same table with him, for that matter. At any rate, don't get excited yet; it's a fair guess that Weatherby doesn't know enough about the game to make the team. But as long as he's trying for it I won't have him bullied." Joe sat up suddenly and punched a purple and white cushion viciously. "I tell you candidly, old man, I'm going to turn out a winning team this spring, and just as long as a fellow plays good ball and does as he's told, I don't give a continental if he's ostracized by the whole State! I gave my solemn word to Tom Higgins last year, after the game, that I'd win from Robinson, and I'm going to keep that promise!"

"I'll never forget old Tom that day. The poor duffer was crying like a baby all the way back to the yard. 'You'll be captain, Joe,' he said, 'and you've got to promise to wipe this out. You've got to give me your word of honor, Joe.' 'I'll do everything that I can, Tom,' said I. And we shook hands on it. 'If you don't beat them next year, Joe,' he blubbered, 'I'll come back here and I'll lick you until you can't stand. I swear I will!' And he would, too," laughed Joe.

"That's all well enough," answered Tracy, "but you don't want to go too far, Joe; the fellows won't stand everything even from you."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, there's lots of 'em now who think you've made a mistake in choosing Hanson for coach; you know that. They say that Hanson lost everything when he was captain three years ago, and that year before last, when he coached, we lost again. They think you should have got a coach who had something to show. And now if you insist on putting it on to the fellows with this coward, Weatherby, you'll have to look out for squalls."

"Good stuff!" Joe's blue eyes sparkled, and his mouth set itself straightly. "I'm open to all the squalls that come my way. I like squalls. And when they've blown over the other chaps may be surprised to find that they're a considerable distance from the scene of operations. Oh, no, my boy, you can't scare me by talking that way! I know what the fellows said —some of them, that is—about my selecting Hanson, and I don't give a continental. Hanson is all right. When he was captain here he had the poorest lot of players that any man ever had to contend with; anybody who was in college will tell you that. They couldn't field and they couldn't bat; the only thing

they could do was kick; they kicked about the schedule, and they kicked about the amount of work they had to do, and they kicked about the training-table. Nobody on earth could have won with that team. As for year before last, Hanson coached and we didn't win, I know. We didn't win last year, for that matter, but nobody lays the blame on the coach. Hanson is all right. He knows the game all through; he's a gentleman, and he gives every minute of his time to the team. The best judge of whether what I say is true is 'Baldy' Simson. You go and ask 'Baldy,' and if he doesn't tell you the same thing I'll eat my hat. And when you hear a trainer say that a coach is all right, there's something in it."

"Oh, well, I don't know much about it myself! I'm only saying what the fellows in general think, Joe."

"I know; there's no harm done. Only, if there are any squalls, Tracy, you take your friends and get into a cellar somewhere until they've blown over," said Joe suggestively.

"Oh, I'm not scared!" Tracy replied, laughing uneasily. "I'll stand by you."

"All right," answered Joe gravely. "That'll be safest."

There came a knock at the door, and Joe shouted,

"Come in!" When he saw who his caller was he arose from the window-seat and stepped forward.

"How are you, Weatherby? Want to see me?"

"Yes, if you have a minute to spare." Jack looked calmly at the occupant of the Morris chair, and Joe understood.

"Certainly," he answered. "Sit down." Then, "I don't like to put you out, old man," he said, turning to Tracy, who had so far made no move toward withdrawing, "but I guess I'll have to ask you to excuse me a moment."

"That's all right," replied Tracy, lazily pulling himself out of his seat and staring insolently at the newcomer. "I'm a bit particular, anyway." He lounged to the door, carefully avoiding contact with Jack. "See you in the morning," he added. "So long."

When the door had closed, Joe glanced at the caller, instinctively framing an apology for the insult. But Jack's countenance gave no indication that he had even heard it. Joe marveled and pointed to a chair.

"Sit down, won't you?" he asked politely.

The other shook his head.

"No, thanks. What I've got to say will take but a minute," he answered calmly.

CHAPTER V

AN ENCOUNTER IN THE YARD

"Oh," said Joe, vaguely, "all right." He wondered, rather uncomfortably, what was coming.

"It's just this," Jack continued. "I tried to get a word with you in the cage, but there was always some one around. I wanted to know if—if after what happened the other day at the river, you have any objection to my trying for the nine. You see," he went on, hurriedly, "I know what the fellows call me, and I thought maybe you'd rather I didn't come out. You just tell me, you know, and it'll be all right. I won't show up again."

"I see," said Joe. "No, I haven't the least objection; in fact, I'm glad to have you. I don't pretend to judge that—affair at the river, Weatherby; it's none of my business. And the fact is, I want every man that can play baseball to report for practise. That's plain, isn't it?"

"Yes. I'll keep on then for the present."

"Of course, Weatherby, I can't guarantee that you'll be made welcome by the other candidates; you can understand that. They may act unpleasantly, or say ugly things. I'm not able to restrain them. You'll have to risk that, you know."

"I understand," answered Jack calmly. "They've already called me a coward. I don't believe they can say anything worse."

"No, I guess not." Joe looked curiously at the other. Then, "I say, Weatherby," he exclaimed, impulsively, "what was the trouble, anyway, the other day? I've only heard one side of it, and I fancy there's another, eh?"

"I'd rather not talk about it, if you please," answered Jack coldly.

"Oh, all right! I beg pardon." Joe felt somewhat huffed. His sympathy for the other was for the moment snuffed out. Jack moved toward the door.

"By the way," said Joe, in business-like tones, "I think you told me you'd played ball some. Where was it?"

"At home, on the high-school team. I played three years."

"What position?"

"I pitched the last year. Before that I played in the outfield, generally at right."

"I see." Joe's hopes of the other's usefulness dwindled. He had seen a good many cases of ambitious freshmen whose belief in themselves as pitchers was not justified by subsequent events. Every year there reported for practise a dozen or so of hopeful youngsters, who firmly believed themselves capable of filling all such important positions as pitcher and catcher, merely on the strength of having played such positions with more or less success on some fourth- or fifth-rate team. Joe mentally assigned Jack to this class of deluded ones.

"Well," he said, "of course you may count on having a fair trying-out, but I wouldn't hope for too much. You see, a fellow has to be something of an expert to get in the box here; it's different from playing on a high-school team. Besides, we're rather well fixed for pitchers: there's Gilberth and King and Knox, all of whom are first-class men. Of course, we want new material wherever we can find it, and if you prove that you can pitch good ball we'll give you all the chance you want. But if I were you I'd try for something else this spring, for some position in the field. We're long on pitchers and short on out-fielders. Of course, you could keep your hand in at twirling; there'd be plenty of opportunity for that at practise."

"I'll take whatever I can get," answered Jack.

"I don't lay any claim to being a wonder at pitching. I was the best we had in Auburn, but, of course, that doesn't mean very much."

"Auburn, Maine? Do you live there?"

"Two miles outside of town."

"Is that so? Maybe you know a cousin of mine there, Billy Cromwell? His father has a big tannery. He graduated from here three years ago this coming spring."

"I know him quite well," replied Jack, smiling for the first time since he had entered the study. "It was Billy who persuaded me to come here. He used to tell me about Erskine a good deal. Of course, he's seven or eight years older than I am, but he was always very nice to me."

"Think of that!" said Joe. "The idea of you being a friend of Billy's! He's fine chap, is Billy. What's he doing now?"

"Why, he's assistant superintendent. Every one likes him very much, and he's awfully smart, I guess. Well, I'll report again to-morrow. I'm glad I saw you, and—thank you."

"Of course you'll report. And if I can help you at any time, just let me know." He opened the door and Jack passed out. "See you to-morrow, Weatherby."

"Yes. Good afternoon."

When Jack reached the head of the stairs he heard Joe's voice again and paused.

"I say, Weatherby," the baseball captain was calling, "come around and see me sometimes. I want to hear more about Billy."

"Thank you," was the non-committal reply.

Joe closed the door, took up a Greek book, and went back to the window-seat. When he had found his place he looked at it frowningly a moment. "'Thank you,' says he," he muttered. "As much as to say, 'I'm hanged if I do!' That youngster is a puzzle; worse than this chump, Pausanias!"

The warm spell of Thursday and Friday had been succeeded by a drop in temperature that had converted the pools into sheets of ice. The board-walks and the paths still made treacherous going, and when, after leaving Sessons Hall, in which Joe Perkins roomed, Jack had several times narrowly avoided breaking his neck, he left the paths and struck off across the glistening snow toward the lower end of the yard. It was almost dusk, and a cold, nipping wind from the north made him turn up the collar of his jacket and walk briskly. There were but few fellows in sight, and he was glad of it. To be sure, by this time he should have been inured to the silently expressed contempt

which he met on every side, to the barely audible whispers that greeted his appearance at class, to the meaning smiles which he often intercepted as they passed from one neighbor to another. Yet despite that he was schooling himself to bear all these things calmly, and with no outward sign of the sting they inflicted, he was not yet quite master of himself, and was grateful that the coming darkness and the well-nigh empty yard promised him present surcease from his trials.

Until he had entered Joe Perkins's study a quarter of an hour before he had met with no voicing of the public contempt. He had managed to accept Tracy Gilberth's veiled insult with unmoved countenance, yet it had required the greatest effort of any. He didn't know who that man was; he only knew, from observation in the practise-cage, that he was the foremost candidate for the position of pitcher, and so must be, in view of Perkins's remark, either Gilberth or King or Knox. Whoever he was, Jack vowed, some day he would be made to regret his words. For although Jack was accepting his fate in silence, he was very human, and meant, sooner or later, to even all scores.

When he had almost reached College Place and had taken to the board-walk again, footsteps crunching the frosty planks ahead of him brought his mind sud-

denly away from thoughts of revenge. He looked up and saw that the man who approached and in another moment would pass him was Professor White. Jack stepped off the boards and went on with averted eyes. The professor recognized him at that instant, and as they came abreast spoke.

"Good evening, Weatherby."

There was no answer, nor did Jack turn his head. The professor frowned and stopped.

"Weatherby!" he called sharply. Jack paused and faced him.

"Well, sir?" he asked, quietly.

"What does this mean? Are you trying to add boorishness to—to your other failings?"

"No, sir, I was only trying to spare you the unpleasantness of speaking to a coward."

"Very thoughtful of you," said the other, sarcastically. "But allow me to tell you, sir, that if you want to remove the—ah—the sorry impression you have made you will have to adopt a less high-and-mighty manner."

"It's a matter of indifference to me what impression you hold, sir," replied Jack simply. "Good night."

The professor stood motionless and looked after the boy until he had crossed the street, the anger in his

face slowly fading before a grudging admiration of the other's clever, if extremely impolite, retort. Presently he swung his green bag of books under his arm again and trudged on.

"I wonder if I wasn't too hasty the other day," he muttered. "For a coward he's got a surprising amount of grit, apparently. He'll bear watching."

Jack sped homeward, feeling rather pleased with himself. His score with the professor wasn't by any means even, but the encounter had put something to his credit, and as he remembered the professor's look of amazement and anger he chuckled.

There was a light in Tidball's room as he crossed the corner of the Common, and as he looked a grotesque head showed in gigantic silhouette against the yellow curtain. Jack ran up the stairs and knocked at his neighbor's door.

"Come in!" drawled the occupant of the western chamber, and Jack entered on a scene that caused him to pause just inside the door and stare in silent surprise.

Anthony waved the coffee-pot hospitably.

CHAPTER VI

IN DISGRACE

ANTHONY TIDBALL confronted Jack with a pewter spoon in one hand and a small tin coffee-pot in the other. He was in his shirt-sleeves and a bath-towel was fastened around his neck, descending in wispy folds to his knees. On one end of the study table a second towel was laid, and upon it rested a plate of bread, a jar of preserves, a wedge of cheese, a can of condensed milk, a bowl of sugar, and cellars containing salt and pepper. Besides these Jack saw a plate appropriately surrounded by knife, fork, and spoon, and flanked by a cup and saucer. There was a perceptible, and not ungrateful, odor of cooking present. Anthony waved the coffee-pot hospitably, but carefully, toward the rocking-chair.

"Hello, Weatherby," he said. "Sit down."

"Wha—what are you doing?" gasped Jack.

"Cooking supper. Have some? You're just in time." He took the towel from his neck and, going

to the gas-stove, used it to remove a pie-plate from above a tiny frying-pan.

"Supper?" echoed Jack. "Do you mean that you —cook your own meals?"

"Yes," responded Anthony, calmly. He approached the table with the pan, and from it dexterously transferred six small sausages on to the empty plate. Then he put a spoonful of milk and two spoonsful of sugar into the bottom of the cup and filled it to the brim with steaming and very fragrant coffee. "Yes, I've been my own chef," he continued, "ever since I came here. When Gooch and I were together it was a good deal simpler. I got breakfast and he got supper; our lunches were just cold things. You see, Weatherby, we're poor folks, and I couldn't stay in college three months if I had to pay four dollars a week for meals. As it is, it's a close haul sometimes."

"Everything looks very nice," murmured Jack, taking the chair and observing the proceedings with frank curiosity.

"Well, if you don't object, I'll just begin operations while things are hot," said Anthony. He tucked a corner of the bath-towel under his chin and began his repast. "There's nothing sinful in poverty, they say, and of course they're right; but it's pretty hard

sometimes not to be ashamed of it. I don't tell every one that I cook my meals in my room. It wouldn't do. But you were certain to find it out sooner or later, and it might as well be sooner. I say, would you mind turning off the gas over there? Thanks."

"Do you mean that you can save money this way?" asked Jack as he sat down again.

"You better believe it. When Gooch and I kept house together our food cost us about one dollar and five cents apiece every week. I guess now it'll cost me nearer two dollars."

"But even then you're saving two dollars by not going to a boarding-house," said Jack reassuringly.

"Yes, I know," replied Anthony, as he started on his second sausage, "but four dollars a week is my limit. And I'm paying more for this room than I did for my half of the other one. I guess I'll have to retrench a while. Dad pays my tuition and I look after the rest myself. I earn enough in the summer taking out fishing parties and the like of that to last me. Last summer was a poor season, though; fish wouldn't bite and folks wouldn't go out with me. However, I got a scholarship, and that helped some. But I'm sailing a good deal nearer the wind than I did last year. And next week I've got to go over to

Robinson, and I guess that will just about bankrupt me for a while."

"What are you going there for?" Jack inquired.

"Debate."

"Of course!" cried the other. "I remember now! I couldn't think where I'd heard your name. Why, you're the president of the Lyceum, aren't you? and the crack debater? The fellow who won for Erskine last year when every one expected to be beaten?"

"Well, something of that sort," replied the junior. "Anyhow, I've got to go to Robinson next week. If we're defeated after I've gone and paid five dollars and eighty cents in railroad fares——!"

Words failed him and he finished the last of the sausages with a woful shake of his head.

"What are our chances?" asked Jack.

"About the same as last year, I guess. We may and we mayn't. Robinson's got a fellow, named Heath, this year that's a wonder, they say. We've lost Browning and Soule, and that leaves us sort of weak."

"I'd like to go," said Jack, "but I don't believe I could afford it."

"Wish you could," Anthony responded heartily. "We need all the support we can get. If it was a football game, now, I guess the whole college would go along. As it is, I suppose we'll have about two

dozen beside the speakers. Did you ever try condensed milk with raspberry jam?"

Jack had to acknowledge that he never had.

"It's right good," said Anthony, spreading a generous spoonful of the mixture on a slice of bread. "If you kind of shut your eyes and don't think about it the condensed milk tastes like thick cream."

Jack watched in silence a moment. Then—

"I took your advice," he announced.

"Saw Perkins, you mean? What did he say?"

"Said it was all right; said he was glad to have me."

"That's good."

"And I met Professor White in the yard."

"What happened?" asked Anthony, turning his lean, spectacled face toward the other in evident interest. Jack recounted the conversation and Anthony grinned.

"Pretty cheeky, though, weren't you?"

"I suppose I was," Jack acknowledged. "But I don't care; he had no business saying I was boorish. He—he's a cad!"

"Easy there! Don't call names, Weatherby; it's a mean way to fight. White's not as bad as he seems to you. He's made a mistake and when he discovers the fact he'll be the first to acknowledge it. You'll see."

Anthony produced his brier pipe and began to smoke.

"Bother you much to-day, did they?" he asked.

"Some. I can stand it, I suppose."

"They'll get tired pretty soon and forget it," said the other kindly. "Keep your hand on the tiller, take a couple of reefs in your temper, and watch out. There's your supper bell."

"Yes, I must wash up. Are you going to be busy to-night?"

"Not to hurt. Come in and bring your knitting."

"I will," said Jack gratefully.

The growing friendship with the new lodger was the one bright feature in Jack's existence at this time, and during the next few weeks he frequently found himself viewing with something that was almost equanimity the occurrence at the river and its results, since among the latter was his acquaintance with Anthony Tidball. Anthony had hosts of acquaintances, but few friends; friends, he declared, were too expensive. But he adopted Jack during the first week of their acquaintance, and at once became guardian, mentor, and big brother all rolled into one. Jack went to him with his troubles—and he had a good many in those days—and listened to his advice, and generally acted upon it. It was a new and delightful experience to

the younger boy to have a chum, and he made the most of it, resorting to Anthony's room whenever he wanted society, and interrupting the junior's studying in a way that would have summoned a remonstrance from any one save the good-hearted victim. Anthony always laid aside his books and pens, filled his pipe, took one foot into his lap, and listened or talked with unfailing good nature. And after Jack had taken himself off, Anthony would discard his pipe and buckle down to work in a mighty effort to make up for lost time, not infrequently sitting with the gas-stove between his knees long after the village clock had struck twelve, and every one else in the house was fast asleep.

Sometimes they took walks together, for both were fond of being outdoors, and it became a common thing to see the tall, awkward junior striding alongside the freshman and leaning down near-sightedly to catch his words. For a while the college world wondered and exclaimed. Tidball was a person of vast importance, a queer, quiet, serious sort of fellow, but a master at study and debate, a man whose counsels were asked for and hearkened to with deep respect, and in general opinion a person who would be heard from in no uncertain way in the future. Hence, when the college saw that Tidball had taken up Weatherby, the college began to suspect that it had very possibly been over-

hasty in its judgment of the latter youth. Indications of this began to be apparent even to Jack; fellows were less uneasy when lack of other seats made it necessary for them to sit beside him at Chapel or at recitations; several times he was greeted by name, rather shamefacedly to be sure, by members of his own class; and baseball practise became less of an ordeal for him, since the candidates generally showed a disposition to recognize his existence and speak him fair. But if these condescending ones looked for evidences of gratitude from Jack they were doomed to disappointment. He returned greetings politely but without cordiality, and made not the least move toward grasping the hand of fellowship so hesitatingly and doubtingly advanced.

"If I was not good enough to associate with before," he told himself, "I'm no better now, merely because one man of prominence walks across the yard with me."

He had never accepted Joe Perkins's invitation to call. He was grateful to the captain for the friendliness the latter had shown him, and continued to show him on every occasion. But Perkins believed him a coward, just as the others did. Joe repeated his invitation twice and then gave it up. Yet the more he saw of Jack the more he was inclined to doubt the

fairness of the general verdict, and so, in spite of duties that took up practically every minute of his waking hours, he found time to write a letter to his cousin, Billy Cromwell, in Auburn. Eventually he received a reply. There were eight sheets of it altogether, as was natural, considering that Billy hadn't written to Joe previously for something over six months, but only a small portion of the epistle is of interest here.

"I know Jack Weatherby very well [Billy wrote]. His folks and mine are old acquaintances. His father has a farm near here, but never has done very well with it, I believe. You know what some of our farms hereabout are; the Weatherby place is like them, only more so. Jack's a smart, plucky youngster; a good sort all through. If you can help him along you'll be doing me a favor. And I think you'll like him if you know him better. And if you can get him on to the nine you'll be doing well for the nine, I promise you. Jack's one of those dependable chaps that you meet about once in a thousand years; if he says he'll knock out a two-bagger, he'll do it. And he isn't afraid of work or anything else. That's about all, I think. You said you wanted to know all I could tell you about Jack, and I think I've told it. Remember me to him when you see him."

Joe folded the letter and put it back in the envelope.

"I never knew Billy to get taken in by any one yet," he said to himself, "and so I fancy we've sized up young Weatherby all wrong. I'll have another talk with him. Only—how to get hold of him?"

CHAPTER VII

AT THE BATTING NETS

MEANWHILE Erskine had won a victory over Robinson, a victory which did not, perhaps, occasion as much enthusiasm as would have a triumph on the gridiron or the diamond, but which, nevertheless, pleased everybody greatly, and added new laurels to the wreath encircling the brow of Anthony Zeno Tidball. Erskine won the debate. The result was never in doubt after Anthony delivered his argument, and when the last word had been said the judges did not even leave their seats, but, after a moment of whispered conference, awarded the victory to the visitors.

The debaters and their small company of supporters did not return to Centerport until noon the next day, and long before that the morning papers had arrived and the college at large had proudly read their account of the contest. That explains why when Anthony, attired in a long, yellowish plaid ulster of great an-

tiquity, and carrying his nightgown and toothbrush wrapped in a piece of brown paper, lurched from the train to the station platform and looked about him, his jaw dropped in ludicrous dismay, and he made a hurried effort to retreat. But his companions were crowding down behind him and he was forced forward into the ungentle hands of the cheering students, who filled the platform. Somehow, he never knew quite how, he was thrust and lifted to a baggage truck, from which, since his legs were securely pinioned by several enthusiastic jailers, he found it impossible to make his escape. So he hugged his bundle desperately and beamed good-humoredly about him, recognizing the advisability of making the best of things. The other debaters were hustled to his side in a wild medley of cheers, and then, clutching each other madly in an effort to maintain their balance, they were wheeled up and down the long platform in the vortex of a swirling throng and cheered to the echo, individually and collectively. For his part, Anthony was filled with a great relief when the train with its long line of grinning faces at the windows drew away, and with a greater relief when one of the occupants of the truck, losing his hold, tumbled between the framework, and so brought the triumphal procession to an end.

The prey were allowed to escape, and Anthony

drew his long ulster about his thin shanks and scuttled ungracefully into Town Lane and so out of the rabble of still cheering students. But he hadn't escaped Jack, for that youth, somewhat out of breath, overtook him before he had reached the corner and showered fragmentary congratulations upon him.

"I got up—almost before—light," panted Jack, bravely trying to keep up with Anthony's long strides, "and went—down and—got a—paper—and—read—read— Oh, don't go so fast, please!"

Anthony moderated his pace and put an arm affectionately over the other's shoulders.

"Did you?" he asked. "Well, now, that was real friendly."

"And when I—saw—that you'd won—I danced a jig in—the—middle of Main Street!"

"And haven't got your breath back yet?" laughed Anthony.

"But—aren't you glad?" asked Jack.

"I should say so," answered the other. "So tickled that I don't mind the money it cost."

Another event, important to a large part of the college, took place a day or two later. March, which had raged in with a big snow-storm, relented and attempted the rôle of April. The ground dried and became firm and springy and little warm breezes almost

induced one to believe that he had somehow lost track of the months and had torn one too few leaves from his calendar. Erskine Field, given over during the winter to snow and winds, clothed itself in a new green livery and suddenly became the Mecca for more than half the college. One Thursday morning the following welcome notice hung in the window of Butler's book-store:

> UNIVERSITY BASEBALL.—Outdoor practise on the Field at 4 sharp. Candidates must bring their own togs.

Jack went out to the field early and, having got into his baseball clothes, threw his white sweater over his back, and sat down on the steps of the locker-house in the sunshine. Many fellows passed him, going in and out of the building, some according him a word of greeting, others a mere nod, while still others pretended not to see him. But Jack was beyond slights to-day. The spring was in his blood and he would have liked to throw himself down on the grass and roll over like a colt for mere joy of living. Instead, he only beat a restless tattoo with his heels and watched the passers. Presently the varsity squad trotted out; King, who played left field and was substitute pitcher; Billings, third-baseman; "Wally" Stiles, second-baseman; Knox, last year's shortstop and substitute pitcher;

"Teddy" Motter, crack first-baseman; Lowe, center-fielder, and several more, with Gilberth emerging last of all in talk with Joe Perkins.

Jack watched Gilberth as he went by, much as a cat watches a mouse beyond its present reach. He had a score to even with Tracy Gilberth, and he was convinced that in good time the opportunity would come to him to even it. Meanwhile he waited patiently, observing Gilberth like a calm, inscrutable Fate. Gilberth had a firm grasp on the pitcher's place, while Jack was only one of the second squad, and so, of late, their paths seldom crossed, and the senior had had no chance to give expression to his sentiments regarding the freshman. Of this Jack was glad, since Gilberth's contemptuous glances roused his hatred as nothing else could.

The varsity squad took possession of the diamond and began practising. Presently Bissell, the varsity center-fielder, made his appearance and took the second squad in charge. Bissell was out of the game for the while with a sprained ankle, and Hanson, the head coach, had placed the second squad under his wing. There were sixteen of them in all, for the most part upper classmen who had failed to make the varsity the year before, with a sprinkling of sophomores and two freshmen. The freshmen were Jack and a small, wiry

chap, named Clover, who was trying for shortstop. Bissell led the way to the batting nets and soon they were hard at work. A third squad, made up of some twenty more or less hopeless candidates, many of them freshmen who would later form the nucleus of their class nine, were occupying an improvised diamond at the farther end of the football field. The scene was animated and interesting. The sharp crack of bat meeting ball, the shrill cries of the coachers, and the low thud of flying spheres against padded gloves filled the air.

Jack had just finished his first turn at bat by sending a hot grounder across the grass, and had taken his place at the end of the line again when he heard an authoritative voice addressing Bissell, and looked around to find the head coach standing by.

"Haven't you got a man who can pitch better than that, Bissell?" asked the coach.

Bissell surveyed the candidates doubtfully and the man who was pitching, quailing under the disapproving eye of the coach, threw his next ball over the batsman's head and so completed his disgrace. The head coach was a small man, small in stature and small of limb and feature, but possessed of a shrewd and sharp brown eye that was the terror of shirking candidates. He was unmistakably good-looking, was Hanson—his

full name was Alfred Ward Hanson—and had the faculty of commanding instant respect, rather a difficult feat for a small man. He was aided there, however, by a reputation for wonderful playing; nothing commands the respect and allegiance of the soldier or the athlete as does past prowess, and an army officer or college coach whose history contains valorous deeds is seldom troubled with insubordination or discouraged by half-heartedness in the ranks. Hanson was liked, respected, admired, and—feared.

"You must have somebody here that's able to pitch a straight ball," continued the coach.

"There ought to be," replied Bissell. "How about it, you fellows? Can any of you pitch?"

There was a moment's silence. Undoubtedly several of them could, but with Hanson's dissatisfied gaze upon them they hesitated to make known their accomplishment. It was Jack who spoke first.

"I can pitch some," he said, in matter-of-fact tones, stepping out of the line. "I'll try, if you like."

"Go ahead then," said Hanson. "It isn't necessary to pitch curves; just get an occasional ball over the plate."

The head coach went over to the other net and Jack took the place of the retired pitcher. He hadn't tried pitching since the summer and his first ball went

very wide. The line of waiting batsmen grinned; some even laughed audibly.

"That's a great deal better," remarked one of them with fine sarcasm, and the laugh became general.

"That'll do, Showell," exclaimed Bissell. "We don't need your opinion." Showell, a junior, and the fellow whom Jack had ousted, grinned sheepishly under the amused glances of the others and Jack settled down to business. After a few poor balls he got his hand in again and Bissell nodded approvingly. One after another the candidates took their places in front of the net and stayed there until they had made clean hits. Jack did not attempt to puzzle them, for at this time of year, despite the practise in the cage, batting work was still pretty poor. He delivered straight balls as slow as possible and the line moved along quickly. When Showell took his place, however, Jack remembered his sarcastic remark and resolved to make the former pitcher earn his hit. He attempted no curves or drops, but sent the first ball very straight over the square of wood that did duty as a plate. But if it was straight it was also swift, so swift that Showell merely looked at it go by and then glanced inquiringly at Jack as he tossed it back to him.

He gripped his bat afresh then, and waited the next ball confidently. It came, and was, if anything, swifter

than the one before. Showell struck at it hard, but was half a foot too late. The watchers began to guess what was up and looked on interestedly.

"Shorten your swing, Showell," directed Bissell. "You were way too late then."

Showell's face took on a deep red and he gritted his teeth as Jack slowly and calmly threw up his arms for the next delivery. Again the ball came straight and fast over the plate and this time Showell struck an instant too soon and the sphere glanced up off his bat, bounded against the hood of the net, and came down on his head ere he could duck. He picked it out of the dust and tossed it back with no pleasant expression. The line was grinning appreciatingly by this time, but Jack's face showed neither amusement nor interest. Again Showell struck and missed miserably.

"What are you pitching, Weatherby?" Bissell asked suspiciously.

"Just straight balls," answered Jack, simulating surprise.

"Well, now look here, Showell," said the acting coach, "do try and remember what you've been taught. Give me the bat." Bissell took the other's place. "Don't stand as though you were going to run away. Face the plate; if you're hit you've got your base. Now, watch me. All right, Weatherby."

Jack sent him a fairly fast ball, and Bissell took it neatly on the end of his stick and sent it sailing in a short flight toward right field.

"You see, Showell? Swing back easily and don't try to slug the ball. If you swing hard you miss your balance nine times out of ten. Bring the bat around easily on a line with the ball, hold it firmly and you've got your hit. Try it again, please."

Showell did try it again and struck a palpable foul. Once more he tried and missed entirely. By this time he was as mad as a hatter.

"I can't hit them unless he sends them over the plate," he growled, eying Jack aggressively.

"You need to learn how to bat," said a voice behind him. "I guess it would do you good to have a term with the third squad."

He looked around into the face of Hanson, who unnoticed, had been watching his work for several minutes. He subsided and again faced the pitcher. But Jack had no desire to bring about Showell's removal to the third squad, and so sent him a slow ball that he could not help hitting. When Showell had yielded his bat to the next man and stepped away Hanson turned to Bissell.

"Who's that fellow?" he asked.

"Showell, a junior."

"Junior? No, no; I mean the youngster that's pitching."

"Oh, that's Weatherby, a freshman."

"Weatherby? Oh, yes." He watched Jack send in a couple more balls and then turned to Bissell again. "You'd better let him keep on pitching," he said. "Seems to me he's rather promising. What do you think?"

"I've never seen him pitch until to-day," answered Bissell. "But he seems to be able to send in good, clean, straight balls. I don't suppose he knows much about anything else, though."

"Well, keep your eye on him," said Hanson. "Can't have too many pitchers, and that chap looks as though he might learn."

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST STRAW

JACK marked the first of April a red-letter day in his memory, for on that day he was taken on to the varsity nine as substitute. The fact was made known to him after practise when, with the others, he was dressing himself in the locker-house. The head coach appeared in their midst with a slip of paper and Jack listened indifferently until he heard his name spoken. Even then the absurd idea came to him that it was an April fool.

"Just a moment, please," said Hanson; and when the hubbub had suddenly ceased, "the training-table will start in the morning at Pearson's," he announced, "and the following men will report there for breakfast: King, Knox, Gilberth, Billings, Stiles, Motter, Bissell, Lowe, Northup, Smith, Griffin, Mears, and Weatherby. Later, about the middle of the month, more men will be taken on. At present these are all we can accommodate. Breakfast is at eight prompt, and we want every man to be there on time. That's all."

After he had gone out those of the fellows remaining began an interested discussion of the announcement. Jack, pulling on his shoes, listened silently.

"Where were you, Jimmie?" asked King.

"I'm one of the 'also-rans,' I guess," answered Riseman, a substitute fielder, sadly.

"Beaten by a freshie," called a fellow across the room. "Fie, fie, for shame!"

"Who's the freshie?" called some one else.

"Weatherby," answered two or three voices. "Weatherby, the brave!" added another. An admonitory "S—s—s—sh!" arose from Jack's vicinity, and King whispered around the corner of the next alley: "Shut up, you fellows; he's over here." And then another voice, one which Jack instantly recognized as Gilberth's, drowned King's warning.

"Do you suppose Hanson expects us to sit at the same table with that bounder?" he asked loudly.

Jack's face paled, and he bent his head quickly over the shoe he was lacing. "He knows I'm here," he told himself grimly, "and pretends he doesn't. If he says 'Coward,' I'll—I'll—" A lace broke in his hand. King suddenly began talking very loudly to Riseman about the baseball news from Robinson, but above that Jack heard Gilberth's voice again:

"I'd be afraid he'd put poison in my coffee. A

fellow that'll stand by and see a person drown before his eyes without making a move at helping him might do anything. For my part— "What? Who is?" There was an instant's pause. Then, "Well," continued the speaker in slightly lowered tones, "there's an old proverb about listeners—" The rest trailed off into silence.

King was still talking volubly and seemingly at random. In spite of his almost overmastering anger, Jack recognized King's good-hearted attempt to spare him pain, and was grateful. His hands trembled so that he could scarcely tie his broken string, and the tears were very near the surface; he had to gulp hard once or twice to keep them back. The temptation to kick off the unlaced shoe, dash recklessly around the corner, and knock Gilberth down, to fight him until he could no longer stand, was strong. He kept his head bent and his blazing eyes on the floor and fought down the impulse. He had promised Anthony to keep silence; to lose command of himself now would be to waste all those weeks of self-repression which, he believed, and was right in believing, had made a favorable impression upon his fellows. He tried to think of other things, of his luck in being taken on to the 'varsity, of how pleased Anthony would be at hearing about it. Presently he finished lacing his shoes, stood up and calmly

donned his coat. Then, in spite of himself, he hesitated.

The thought of passing through the locker-room under the staring, antagonistic eyes of a score or so of men, of running the gantlet of whispers and low laughter, for the moment appalled him. Then, as he slowly buttoned the last button, he heard a voice at his side.

"Ready, Weatherby? If you don't mind, I'll walk back with you."

He looked around into the pleasant face of King and, after a moment of surprise, muttered assent. The central aisle was filled with fellows in various stages of attire and the two had to worm their way through. Jack went first, doing his level best to look unconcerned and at ease, and King followed close behind him, talking over his shoulder all the way. At the door King stepped ahead and threw open the portal, guiding Jack through with a friendly push on the back. When they had disappeared, one or two witnesses of the affair exchanged surprised or amused glances. But only Gilberth commented aloud.

"Very touching!" he laughed. "King to the rescue of Insulted Innocence!"

"Oh, forget it!" growled some one from the depths of a twilit alley.

Outside, on the porch, Jack turned to King with reddened cheeks. "Thank you," he said.

"All right," answered the other carelessly. "Fair play, you know."

Jack hesitated, waiting for the other to take his departure. King looked at him quizzically.

"Look here, Weatherby, don't be so beastly snobbish," he expostulated with a touch of impatience. "If you object to my company back to the Yard, just say so, but don't look as though I was too low down to associate with."

Jack colored and looked distressed.

"I didn't mean to, honestly!" he protested. "Of course, I don't object to your company. I—I only thought——"

"Well, come on, then." They went down the steps together, just as the door opened to emit a handful of players. "Don't get it into your head, Weatherby, that we're all cads," King continued, "just because Gilberth occasionally acts like one. The fact is, there are plenty of fellows back there who are quite ready to be decent if you'll give them half a chance. The trouble is, though, you look as though you didn't care a continental for anybody. Perhaps you don't; but it isn't flattering, you see. I dare say it sounds pretty cheeky for me to talk like this to you, espe-

cially as we've never been properly introduced and haven't spoken before, but I've been here a year longer than you have, and I know how easy it is to make mistakes. And it seems to me you're making one."

"I don't think you're cheeky," answered Jack quite humbly. "I don't mean to have folks think I'm —think I'm indifferent, either."

"That's all right, then," replied King heartily. "They say you're coming out as a pitcher," he went on, changing the subject, to Jack's relief. "Bissell was telling me to-day."

"I've been pitching some on the second nine," answered Jack.

"Where did you play before you came to college?" asked the other. Jack told him about the high-school nine at Auburn, and the rest of the way back the talk remained on baseball matters. He parted from his new acquaintance at the corner of the Yard, and went on alone through a soft, spring-like twilight to his room. He had gained one more of the enemy to his side, he reflected, and that alone was a good day's work. But besides that he had been taken on to the varsity squad, and altogether the day was a memorable one. He climbed the stairs happily, the sting of the incident in the locker-house no longer felt.

Anthony was quite as pleased with his news as Jack had expected him to be, and the two sat together until late that evening discussing the unexpected stroke of fortune.

"Wouldn't be surprised if they let you play in Saturday's game," said Anthony. Jack laughed ruefully.

"I should," he answered. "But it's something to sit on the varsity bench."

The next morning Jack dressed himself under mild excitement at the thought of making his appearance at the training-table. He had notified Mrs. Dorlon the evening before of his departure from her hospitable board and that lady had sniffed disappointedly at the notion of losing her only boarder. But Jack had no regrets for the separation. Pearson's was only about a block from Mrs. Dorlon's, but, nevertheless, Jack reached there several minutes late. The baseball players had been given the big dining-room on the front of the house in which last fall's successful football team, winner of the remarkable 2—0 game with Robinson, had eaten their way to glory.

When Jack entered, the table at first glance appeared to be filled. The next moment he saw that there were three empty seats, two at the farther end of the table and one near at hand, between Gilberth

and Northup. He reflected that it might look cheeky to parade the length of the room, and so, returning the nods of several of the fellows, he slipped into the chair beside Gilberth, fervently hoping that the latter would take no notice of him. Gilberth was busily recounting an adventure which had befallen him the day before while out in his automobile—he was the proud possessor of the only motor vehicle in the town of Centerport—and it is probable that he did not observe Jack's entrance.

"It was just at that narrow stretch before you get to the blacksmith's shop," he was saying. "The fellow had a load of bricks. Well, he stopped, and I stopped, and we looked at each other. Finally, he called out, 'Say, you'll have to back to the corner, I guess. We can't pass here.' 'Back nothing,' I said. 'These things aren't taught to back.' 'They ain't?' said he. 'But you don't expect that I'm going to back with this load on, do you?' 'It's a good deal to expect,' I answered, looking sorry, 'but if you don't, we're likely to stay here until Christmas.' You'd ought to have heard him swear! It was as good as a circus! Well——"

"How are you, Weatherby?" asked Joe Perkins at that moment.

As Jack replied, Gilberth turned and saw him.

Stopping short in his narrative, he silently gathered up his plate, cup, and saucer, and pushing back his chair, arose and walked around the table to one of the other empty seats. The talk died out abruptly, and the fellows watched the proceedings in dead silence. Gilberth's action had taken Jack completely by surprise, and for a moment he could only stare amazedly. Then, as the full force of the insult struck him, the color flooded his cheeks until they burned like fire. His eyes, avoiding the faces across the board, fell upon the sympathetic countenance of the captain, and it was the look of concern he found there that upset him. The tears rushed into his eyes and the hand on the table trembled. He put it in his lap, where it clenched its fellow desperately, and stared miserably at the white cloth. Suddenly upon the uncomfortable silence a voice broke calmly. Gilberth, having settled himself in his new seat, was going on with his story, just as though there had been no interruption.

"After he'd called me everything he could think of," he continued, "he got down and started to back. It took him ten minutes to get to the blacksmith shop, and maybe he wasn't mad! After I got by him, I gave him a little exhibition, free of charge. I backed the machine all over the place, and pretty nearly stood it on end. You ought to have seen his eyes; they almost

popped out of his head. And just when he was beginning to recover his voice, I waved good-by to him, and lit out. Funniest thing you ever saw!"

One or two of his audience laughed half-heartedly, but the most looked gravely disgusted.

"You have a wonderfully keen sense of humor," observed Joe Perkins dryly. Then the conversation began again, and the waitress brought Jack's breakfast. He ate it silently, or as much of it as he could; the coffee scalded his throat, and the steak very nearly choked him. King, sitting near-by, spoke to him once, and he answered. But his voice wasn't quite steady, and so the other wisely refrained from further attempts at conversation. One by one the fellows left the room, and as soon as he dared, Jack followed. He kept his head very high all the way back to his room; but in each cheek there was a bright disk of crimson and his eyes stared straight ahead. A tramp slouching along, with hands in pockets, moved aside to let him pass, but Jack never saw him.

When he had entered the front door, he moved very quietly, mounting the stairs as though contemplating burglary. Anthony's door was ajar, and Jack tiptoed toward it and looked into the bare and shabby room. It was empty, and the fact seemed to relieve him. Crossing to his own room, he turned the key in

the lock and began feverishly to pack his valise. The task did not take him long, and when it was completed, and the bag stood beside the door secured and strapped, he went to the desk and, seizing a sheet of paper, wrote hurriedly. When the composition was finished, he read it through.

"DEAR FRIEND [it ran]: There's no use trying any more. I thought I could stand it, but I just can't. After what happened this morning, there's only one thing for me to do, and I'm going to do it. I'm very sorry to go away from you, because you have been awfully kind to me, and you are the first one I ever knew who seemed like a chum. But I'm going home, and not coming back any more, because I can't stand every one thinking I'm a coward, and Gilberth treating me like mud. I'm sorry I can't keep my promise to you, if it was really a promise, and please don't think I haven't tried, because I have tried very hard. Please don't remember it against me. I'm very, very sorry. Maybe I will meet you again some time.

"Your sincere friend,

"JOHN WEATHERBY.

"P. S. Please keep this charm to remember me by, if you don't mind. You wear it on your watch-chain. Good-by. J. W."

He placed the note and the watch-charm in an envelope, sealed and addressed it, and crossed with it to Anthony's room. When he returned a moment later, he held something concealed in his hand. He unstrapped his valise, and as he did so a noise in the hall outside caused him to glance nervously at the door. Quickly opening the bag he dropped the object he held into it, and again secured it. Going into the hall, he listened. All was still. Returning, he took up bag and overcoat and cautiously crept down the stairs and out of the house. Fearful of being seen, he turned to the left and made his way to the station by Murdoch Street and the railroad.

CHAPTER IX

ANTHONY STUDIES A TIME-TABLE

ANTHONY returned to his room after the first recitation. He had discovered while in his class that he had forgotten his watch, and remembered that he had left it lying on his study table. The first thing that caught his eyes when he entered his room was an envelope bearing the inscription in a round, boyish hand, "Anthony Tidball. Present." Wondering, he tore it open. Something fell from it and rolled to the floor. When found it proved to be a brown Florida bean with a little gold-plated swivel at one end. Anthony stared from the bean to the envelope; then the thought that the latter probably held a note came to him and he went back to it.

He read the note very slowly, a frown deepening the while on his face. He read it the second time and then carefully restored it to the envelope, thrust his big hands into his trousers pockets and lurched to the dormer-window. For a minute or two he stood

there looking out across the Common into a tender green mist of quickening branches. Finally he sighed, shook his head, and turned back to the room.

"Poor kid," he muttered.

But perhaps, he reflected, it was not too late to intercept him. When did the trains leave? He pulled out a table drawer and found a time-card. There was one at 9.22; that had gone. There was another, an express, at 10.16. If Jack had missed the first it was possible, thought Anthony, to reach the station in time to bring him back. It was now——

He felt for his watch, and for the first time since finding the note recollected the reason of his return. He glanced quickly over the table. The watch was not in sight. He distinctly remembered placing it on the blotting-pad while he changed the rather heavy vest he had been wearing all winter for a lighter one. He pushed aside books and papers and searched the table from end to end. Then he went through his drawers and finally, while realizing the uselessness of it, unlocked and searched his trunk. After he had felt in the pockets of what few clothes he possessed he accepted the fact that the watch was gone. But where? Who could have taken it? Who had been in the room—besides Jack? Jack——!

He sat down in the rocker and stared blankly,

frowningly, at the window. It was the stupidest thing in the world to suspect Jack. And yet—! With a mutter of disgust at himself for the entertainment of such a wild suspicion, he jumped up and surveyed the room. But the bed was still unmade and the momentary hope that Mrs. Dorlon might have come across the watch and put it away for him had to be relinquished. He hurried down-stairs and found his hostess in the kitchen. No, she told him, she hadn't been up-stairs yet and hadn't seen the watch. Had any one been up there? Well, she didn't know of any one. Still, the door had been open all the morning and—Why, yes, come to think of it, she had thought once that she heard footsteps up-stairs and presumed that they were Mr. Weatherby's, though to be sure she hadn't seen him come in or go out. Could she help Mr. Tidball look for it?

Anthony politely declined her proffered assistance and returned to his room. He searched again about the table, striving to convince himself that he had not left the watch there; that he had worn it to recitation, that the chain had become detached from his buttonhole and that the watch had fallen from his pocket. But it wouldn't do. He remembered clearly just how the timepiece had looked lying in its chamois case upon the blotter, with the heavy gold chain curl-

ing away toward the ink-bottle. Perhaps Jack had come in to find out the time and had unconsciously taken the watch back to his room with him? Of course, that must be it!

He strode across the hall and into the other chamber. There were evidences of hurried flight; the little steamer trunk stood in the middle of the floor and a few odds and ends of rubbish lay about the bed and table. But the watch was not in sight. The latest explanation of its disappearance had seemed so plausible that Anthony experienced keen disappointment. Turning, he retraced his steps toward the door. Halfway there he stopped and stared as though fascinated at something lying at his feet. Stooping, he picked it up and looked at it carefully in the forlorn hope that it would prove to be other than what it was, a little chamois watch-pouch.

Finally he dropped it into his pocket and went back to his room, stepping very quietly, as though leaving a chamber of sickness. He stared aimlessly about for a moment, and then, with a start, took up his notebooks and descended the stairs. Mrs. Dorlon, blacking the kitchen stove, heard the door open and looked up to see the lean, spectacled face of her new lodger peering through. He looked rather pale and sickly that morning, she thought.

"Just wanted to tell you that it's all right," he said. "I found my watch. It was in the—the washstand."

After he had gone she suddenly paused and sniffed perplexedly. "Now that's funny," she thought. "How could he have found it in the washstand when the washstand hasn't any drawer nor nothin'?"

At the luncheon-table Jack was conspicuous by his absence. The story of Gilberth's action at breakfast had filtered through college in a dozen varied forms until by noon it was pretty widely known. The general opinion was that Gilberth had acted brutally; there were even some few who flatly called his behavior contemptible; there were others, fewer still, who thought that he had "given Weatherby just what he deserved." There was considerable relief felt by the more charitably disposed members of the training-table when Jack failed to appear, for his suffering at the breakfast-table had not been a pleasant thing to watch. Gilberth, however, was in high feather. He believed Jack's absence was a result of his treatment in the morning, and was quite proud of his abilities as a public prosecutor. But the rest of the table somehow did not appear to be quite so pleased with him. This fact was shown by a disposition to avoid entering into conversation with him. His remarks were

received in silence, and after a while he gave up the attempt to entertain the company and finished his meal in ruffled dignity.

When luncheon was over "Baldy" Simson, the trainer, who occupied the seat at the foot of the board, called Joe Perkins's attention to the fact of Jack's absence.

"I know," Joe answered, looking rather worried. "I'm going to look him up; you needn't bother. By the way, Tracy, just wait a minute, will you? I want to see you." Gilberth, in the act of leaving the room, returned and tilting a chair toward him slid into it over the back with a fine appearance of unconcern.

"Fire away, Joe," he said. "But I've got a two-o'clock, and it's getting late."

Simson went out and left the two together and alone, save for the waitress who had begun clearing off the table. Joe pushed his plate away and looked gravely across at his friend.

"Look here, Tracy, this thing has simply got to stop, you know."

"What thing?" asked the other, raising his eyebrows.

"Why, you know what I mean. I won't have Weatherby persecuted the way you're doing. I can't

turn out a decent team unless you fellows get together and work in harmony. You know that as well as I do. Whatever your sentiments toward Weatherby may be, you've got to treat him politely in his position as a member of the varsity nine. I won't have any more scenes like the one you brought about this morning. You're worrying Weatherby half sick. He may be what you think he is; I'm not in position to know; but it's all nonsense for you to take on yourself the duties of judge, jury, and hangman. You attend to yourself and let Weatherby attend to himself. That's what I want you to do."

Joe's voice had been getting sharper and sharper as he proceeded and when he had finished his eyes were sparkling dangerously. As always, when Joe's temper threatened to get the better of him, Tracy's usual aggressiveness disappeared and gave place to a sullen stubbornness. Now he traced figures on the stained cloth with a fork and was silent a minute before he made reply. Then:

"There's no use in your lecturing me like that," he muttered. "You can stick up for Weatherby if you want to, but you needn't think you can make me coddle him too. The fellow's a coward and a cad, and you've no business asking decent fellows to sit at table with him."

"You'll sit at table with him or you'll get out," cried Joe hotly.

"Then I'll get out!"

There was silence for a moment, during which Tracy continued to mark up the cloth and Joe struggled more or less successfully to get command of his temper. Finally he asked, almost calmly:

"Do you mean that you'll leave the team, that you'll throw me over and threaten the college with defeat for a mere whim?"

"It isn't a whim," growled Tracy. "It—it's a principle."

Joe smiled in spite of himself and the last of his ill-humor vanished.

"Oh, don't talk poppycock, Tracy," he said. "Look here, you must see how difficult you're making it for Hanson and me. We can't do what we want to do if there are dissensions among you chaps. Like a good fellow, promise me to leave Weatherby alone. He isn't going to interfere with you; you know that. The other fellows aren't kicking up a row about having him at table, so why should you? Besides, Tracy, consider what a thundering hard row the chap has to hoe. Maybe he acted the coward; I didn't see it and don't know; but even if he did it's more than likely that he's a lot worse ashamed of it than you are, and

probably wants to make up for it. Give him a show, can't you? Be generous, Tracy!"

"Well, let him keep away from me, then," Tracy growled.

"How can he when you're both on the team?" asked Joe impatiently. "We want him because he's got the making of a good player; he's sure, quick, and —honest."

"Huh!"

"Yes, honest! We've watched him just as we've watched all you fellows—perhaps a bit more, because he's under suspicion, as it were—and he's played us fair every time. He's done as he's been told and done it just as hard as he knew how. And it's all wrong to call a man dishonest until he's done something dishonest."

"How about that affair at the river?" asked the other sneeringly.

"A man may be a coward at a—a crisis and a brave man all the rest of his life. Physical cowardice isn't dishonesty. For that matter, I can imagine a chap running from bullets and yet standing up like a little man in front of bayonets. I'm not sure I wouldn't run away from bullets myself, and if I were you I wouldn't be too sure, either."

"I'm not a coward," cried Tracy.

"I don't say you are; I don't think you are. And yet you're not brave enough to let public opinion go hang and give that poor duffer, Weatherby, a fighting chance!"

Gilberth received this in silence, staring moodily at the table. The bell in the tower of College Hall began it's imperative summons and Joe pushed back his chair and arose. Tracy followed his example.

"I didn't mean to keep you so long," said the former. He overtook the other at the door and laid a friendly hand on his shoulder. "Don't mind my ill-temper, old man. There's no use in having a friend if you can't bully him a little now and then. And—er—think over what I said, will you?"

"Oh, that's all right," answered Tracy grudgingly. "No harm done. See you later."

Joe stood on the porch and watched him cross the road and disappear up the broad gravel-path toward the laboratories. Then Joe passed down the steps and through the gate with a little smile of satisfaction on his face.

"Yes, it is all right," he told himself. "He'll do as I want him to. But I wish—I do wish I hadn't lost my pesky temper!"

He turned to the left toward Washington Street and as he neared the corner he caught sight of a tall

fellow crossing the Common with long awkward strides. The ill-fitting clothes and the little stoop of the shoulders were sufficient to reveal the man's identity at first glance, and Joe hailed him:

"O *Tid*-ball! O Tid-*ba-a-all!*"

Anthony paused, looked, waved a note-book responsively, and stumbling over a "Keep off the grass" sign, crossed the turf and clambered over the fence.

"How are you, Tidball?" asked Joe, shaking hands. For some reason fellows usually did shake hands with Anthony when they met him, just as they thumped other acquaintances on the back or punched them in the ribs or pulled their caps over their eyes. "You're just the man I wanted to see," Joe went on. "As usual, we're just about stone broke; the Baseball Association, I mean. We've got to have a lot of money for the nine and we've got to raise it by subscription. The schedule has the team down for five games away from home, and that means a heap of expense. The Athletic Association has given us all they could afford to, about one hundred and fifty dollars, but that won't last us any time. So we're going to get up a mass meeting in about a week or so and try and raise the dust. And we want you to speak for us; whoop things up a bit, you know. Can you do it?"

"S'pose so," answered Anthony doubtfully. "But I don't know a blamed thing about baseball."

"You won't have to. We've got plenty of chaps who can talk baseball; what we want is some one who can open their pockets. We're depending on you, Tidball, so say yes, like a good chap. Hanson is going to speak, and so is Professor Nast, and so am I. And we're trying to get the dean to hem and haw a bit for us. But we need you like anything. What do you say?"

"I'll do what I can," said Anthony. "You let me know when it's to be and tell me what you want me to say. Don't believe, though, Perkins, the fellows will pay much attention to what I've got to say about baseball. 'Tisn't as though I knew a ball from a—a——"

"From another ball, eh? Don't let that bother you. I'm awfully much obliged; it's very nice of you. And I'll let you know all about it in a day or two. By the way, though, where are you living now? Some one said you'd left the old joint."

"Yes, I had to when Gooch went home. I'm at Mrs. Dorlon's, down the row there."

"Oh, are you? I was just going there. Doesn't young Weatherby room there?"

"Yes."

"Is he in now, do you know?"

Anthony settled his spectacles more firmly on his nose before he replied.

"No, he's not in just now." He hesitated a moment. Then, "Guess you might as well know about it," he said musingly.

"About what?"

"'Bout Weatherby."

"What's he done?"

"Gone home."

"Gone home?"

"Yes, left college."

"But what for? When did he go?" asked Joe in surprise.

"This morning. He left a note for me. Don't know whether it's my place to tell folks or not. Maybe you'd better keep it quiet. He might change his mind, you know."

"I see," replied Joe thoughtfully. "Do you—do you happen to know why he left?"

"Yes, and I guess you do, too."

"You mean——?"

"Yes. He stuck it out as long as he could, but I guess things got too hot for him. His note made mention of something that happened this morning at training-table."

"By Jove!" muttered the other. "It's a blamed

shame! You know, Tidball, I never quite believed him the—er—coward they say he is. What do you think?"

"Me? Oh, I don't know," answered Anthony uneasily, puckering his lips together. "Maybe he isn't."

Joe looked a little surprised.

"I don't know just why," he said, "but I had an idea you'd support my judgment of him. Well, perhaps it's just as well that he's gone. Although he had the making of——"

"No, no," cried Anthony in sudden contrition, the blood rushing into his thin face. "I didn't mean that! I shouldn't have said it, Perkins! I think he's—I don't believe he's a coward!" He pressed the other's arm convulsively with his long fingers as though seeking to give added weight to the emphatic assertion and hurried away. "Come and see me," he called back.

Joe stared after him in bewilderment.

"Strange duffer, Tidball," he reflected. "Wonder if he and Weatherby had a row? Sounds like it. Poor old Weatherby! I'm sorry he's gone; by Jove, I am sorry! And I fancy I might have prevented it if I'd got after Tracy sooner. Hang him, he ought to be licked!"

CHAPTER X

FLIGHT

When Jack left the house he hesitated a moment at the little gate. Then he turned to the left and hurried to Murdoch Street and down that to the railroad track. He was taking the longest route to the station; but, since his main desire was to avoid meeting any one he knew, it was also the safest. His battered valise, although by no means full, soon grew heavy and began to bump against his legs at every stride. When he reached the track, what with the aggravating behavior of the valise and the difficulty of walking over the uneven ties, speed was no longer possible. He had barely reached the Washington Street crossing when a whistle down the track behind him brought consternation. It was the 9.22 train, he told himself; and he knew that if he missed that he would have to wait a whole hour at the station before he could get another—an hour which might serve to bring

Anthony upon him with a wealth of unanswerable argument in favor of his return.

So, after a quick glance over his shoulder in the direction of the warning blast, he shifted the valise again and set out over the ties at a run. Once he stumbled and the bag went hurtling down the bank and brought up against a board fence. When he had recovered it and had scrambled back to the track the train was but a few hundred yards away. But the station was almost gained now. He retired to a hand-car siding while the engine and its three cars whizzed past him with much grinding of brakes, and then ran on in the wake of dust.

There was no time to buy a ticket. When he reached the platform and the last car, the conductor had already swung his hand to the engineer. Jack pushed his valise on to the car-steps and crawled, breathless, after it. Then the train moved again, and a minute later Centerport was lost to sight. Jack, huddled upon the rear platform, saw it disappear with mingled emotions. Regret was prominent. He wondered at this. Surely, he thought, he had been miserable enough at Erskine to make the parting anything but regretful. And yet, even as he thought that, the idea of leaving the train at the next station and walking back came to him with strange attractiveness.

Anthony would be glad; none else would know that he had contemplated flight; he would go back to the training-table, secure a place on the nine, and do great things—things that would make the college proud of him. And Gilberth might——

But at the recollection of Gilberth the plan lost its attractiveness. Jack gritted his teeth and shook his fist toward where the tower of College Hall was still just visible above the tree-tops. Then, having recovered his breath, he took up his bag and passed into the car. It proved to be the smoker and was almost deserted. He selected a seat on the riverside, placed his valise beside him, and gave himself up to his thoughts. These were not cheerful. He wondered what his father and mother would say to his return. As for the latter, he could count with certainty upon her sympathy and support. But his father was different. He was a man with a stern conscience, and one singularly devoid of the finer sensibilities. For him the path of duty was always clearly defined and he trod it unswervingly, no matter what might befall. And, as Jack well knew, he looked for and demanded the same moral courage from others that he himself displayed. No, there would be no sympathy forthcoming from his father. Jack could almost hear him now:

"You had done no wrong, my son. With a clear conscience you had nothing to fear. The wrong was in running away."

He might, thought Jack, even insist upon his returning. But that he would not do. He would find work and, as soon as possible, would pay back to his father the money wasted upon him at Erskine. He had intended becoming a teacher. But now that was impossible. Perhaps he could get employment from Billy Cromwell. But, whatever happened, he would not, having once reached home, go back to Erskine!

Had Jack been less busy with his thoughts he might, perchance, have taken notice of a passenger who sat across the car and a little to the rear. He was a man of about forty years, with small, clearly cut features, brown eyes, and carefully trimmed mustache and beard. His attire was notably neat. In his mouth was a cigar, in his hands a morning paper, and at his feet a handsome suit-case. Ever since Jack's advent he had been watching him over the top of his paper with a puzzled frown. The boy's face, seen against the white light of the car window, expressed every passing emotion, and the passenger across the aisle, who was a good reader of expressions, felt a stirring of sympathy at the pervading look of despondency he saw.

Presently the conductor entered, and Jack remem-

bered that he must pay his fare. He felt for the little roll of money that was to take him home, first in his vest pocket, then in his trousers. Then, while an expression of bewilderment came over his face, he searched hurriedly in every pocket he possessed. The conductor came and waited patiently. Jack seized his valise and began to unstrap it. Then he paused and glanced uneasily at the conductor.

"I can't find my money," he said. "If you'll just give me a minute or two—" The other nodded and passed on down the car. Jack opened the valise and feverishly searched it. But when it was thoroughly upset he was forced to acknowledge with a sinking heart that the money was not there. He had taken it out of the trunk; he remembered doing that perfectly; he had meant to put it into his vest pocket. But it was not there.

He stared blankly out of the window, still searching his clothes hopelessly. Well, he was not going home after all. Fate had intervened. Disappointed and chagrined, he counted the few coins in his trouser's pocket and found that while they would pay his way to the next station they would not serve to take him back to Centerport. He blinked his eyes to keep back the tears. Tears, he reflected miserably, were always trying to crawl out nowadays. And then—

"What's wrong, Weatherby?"

"What's wrong, Weatherby?" asked a voice over his shoulder, and Jack looked up with startled eyes into the face of Professor White.

For a moment his surprise kept him silent. And in that moment he saw in the professor's face a kindliness that he had never before noticed. The professor's brown eyes were plainly sympathetic and the professor's lips held a little reassuring smile at their corners. And Jack, wondering more, found his tongue.

"Well, that is hard luck," said the professor when he had heard the story. "And you're going home, you say? How much money will it take?"

"About ten dollars," answered Jack. The other shook his head.

"That's not much," he replied, "but I'm sorry to say that it's more than I've got with me. You see, I'm only going to Hampden, three stations up the line, and so didn't bring much. But wouldn't it do if you got off at the next station and went back and got your money? Would the delay matter? How long leave have you got?"

The conductor came back and smiled questioningly at the pair. Jack shook his head.

"I've got to go on," he muttered.

"Well, here now, I'll pay your way to Hampden,

anyhow. That will give us time to consider things. Here you are, conductor."

When the change had been made and the professor was in possession of an elaborate rebate slip, the conductor went off and the professor removed Jack's valise from the seat and sat down at the boy's side.

"How long are you going to be gone?" he asked pleasantly.

Jack hesitated. Then—

"I'm not coming back," he answered defiantly.

"What? Leaving college?"

Jack nodded.

"Why, how's that? What's the trouble?" questioned the professor kindly. "Nothing wrong at home, I hope?"

"No, sir."

"Then what is it?"

Jack was silent, looking scowlingly out of the window at the flying landscape of freshly green hills and meadows with an occasional glimpse of the sparkling river. He would accept the other's help as far as Hampden, he decided; from there he would work his way home somehow; perhaps he could steal a ride now and then on the trains.

"You don't want to tell me, I see," said Professor White. "And I dare say that's natural, Weatherby.

You and I have had a couple of unpleasant conversations, and I suppose the experience doesn't recommend me as a confident. But you're in some sort of trouble and I think you'd better make a clean breast of it and let me help you if I can.

"And while we're speaking of former encounters, Weatherby, I want to tell you that I made a mistake that day down at the coal wharf. I've got lots of faults, and one of the worst of them is an inclination to judge hastily. I accused you of cowardice that day, and I've regretted it very often since. I can understand how it might be possible for you to have hesitated about going into the river and yet not be guilty of cowardice in the strict sense. You see, I've given some thought to the matter, after it was a bit too late. I've been watching you since that day, and I think I made a mistake; I'm certain I did. And I want you to forgive me for the injustice I did you and for the hurt I inflicted. Will you?"

"It doesn't matter," answered Jack drearily. "You only said what all the others thought. I guess it did hurt, but I don't mind now; you see, there's been a lot worse since then."

"Ah!" said the other comprehendingly. "I understand. Don't you think you might tell me something about it, Weatherby?"

And after a doubtful glance at the professor's face, in which he read only sympathy, Jack told him. He spoke bitterly, giving free rein to the pent-up anger and indignation of the past month; and, perhaps, he may be forgiven if unconsciously he exaggerated the tale of his troubles. When he had finished Professor White nodded gravely, and then, after a momentary silence, asked:

"How old are you, Weatherby?"

"Seventeen. I'll be eighteen in July."

"Well, I'm not going to tell you that the thing is trivial, nor that were you older it would appear less tragic. Nothing is trivial that influences our lives, no matter how small it looks; and it is just the things that happen to us when we are young and receptive that are most important. I said I would help you if I could, and I'm going to. But in order to do it I must first convince you that I am your friend, and I fear that's going to be difficult. And," he added, as the train slowed down for the second station, "what's more, I haven't much time to do it."

"Friends," said Jack sagely, "always advise you to do things you don't want to."

"Yes, I guess that's so," answered the professor, smiling. "And I think what I'm going to advise will prove me your friend."

Jack watched the coming and going on the station platform for a minute, then, as the train began to move again, he asked:

"Would you mind telling me—what it is, sir?"

"No; it's this." He laid a hand on the boy's shoulder and spoke earnestly. "Come back, Weatherby, and have another try. Wait," he continued, as the other started to speak, "let me finish first. I'm not going to belittle your trouble; it's a big one and it's hard to bear. But you've borne it for a month and more. You can bear it longer, if you try. Make up your mind to it and you'll do it. From what I can see, Weatherby, you've given up the fight just on the verge of victory. A while back you had the whole college against you; now there is but one fellow actively opposed to you. From what you have told me I can see that Tidball believes in you, and Perkins, and King. They are all men of prominence and their views have weight. Hold on a little while longer and you'll find that the college has come around to their way of thinking. If you give up now you're losing a year of your life that you can't catch up with again if you live to be a hundred. Stick it out and you're a year nearer your degree. Besides, there are your parents, Weatherby; what are they going to think about it? Maybe they'll say you've done right in leaving, but down in

their hearts they are going to be disappointed over this wasted year."

Jack stared dumbly at his hands, and presently the other went on.

"Come back, and I'll do everything I can to help you, my boy. Just what that will be or what it will amount to, I can't say at this moment; but what assistance I can give you may be certain of having. You won't find it an empty promise."

He paused, and Jack looked up.

"I wish I'd—wish I might have talked to you before," he said.

"So do I, Weatherby; but it isn't too late now. I have a suspicion that you've come away without signing off. You needn't tell me whether I'm right or wrong. But you may rest assured that there'll be no trouble about it. To-morrow you and I'll go back together and try it over."

"But what—where am I going to go now?" asked Jack dismally.

"Why, you'll come home with me, of course," replied the professor. "No one need ever know but that you and I came off together. We'll have to take a pretty early train back in the morning, but I guess you won't mind that. My mother and sister will be very glad to see you, and— Hello,

here we are! Grab your bag, Weatherby, and come along."

"But—" stammered the boy.

"All right; you can tell me about that when you get outside. Besides," he laughed, "you've got to get off here, anyhow; your fare is only paid this far. Hurry up, or we'll both get left!"

A moment later Jack found himself out on a sunny platform, dodging a baggage-truck and following his hurrying guide through the throng.

CHAPTER XI

ANTHONY MAKES A STATEMENT

THE morning after Jack's departure Anthony turned in through the little gate at Mrs. Dorlon's and strode quickly up the short path. The time was but a quarter before eight. The sun was out, but was hidden behind a low-lying bank of mist, through which it glowed wanly. In the elms along the street the sparrows were chattering and scolding until one would have thought that every family circle was in the midst of domestic strife, possible because of overlate worms or underdone beetles. It was a tepid sort of morning; the bricks in the pavement were wet with the fog and the air was warm. Anthony wore his coat-collar turned up, not to protect his throat, but to hide the fact that there was no other collar beneath. In his hand he carried a can of condensed milk and a little paper bag of coffee. He had been upset by the events of the preceding day and had neglected to replenish his provision cupboard; hence a postprandial journey to Main Street.

As he climbed the stairs and caught sight of the half-opened door of Jack's room, recollection of that youth returned to him and he sighed as he crossed the little hall and thrust his own door open. Then he stopped short and gave vent to an exclamation of surprise. The condensed milk dropped with a thud and rolled under the cot-bed. Jack, nodding drowsily in the rocker, opened his eyes and jumped to his feet. Then he grinned sheepishly.

"I—I've come back," he muttered.

He partly extended his hand, thinking Anthony would take it. But the latter, after a moment of silent surprise, only said:

"Well! I'm glad to see you." He crawled awkwardly under the cot and recovered the milk. "Changed your mind, eh?" he asked, as he emerged.

His voice was hearty enough, and he smiled behind his spectacles as though pleased, yet Jack felt a chill of disappointment and answered soberly:

"Yes, I changed my mind. I came back on an early train. You weren't in and so I sat down to wait for you; I guess I must have come pretty near to falling asleep. Well, I must go to breakfast."

Anthony fought for a moment against the restraint which gripped him. When he spoke his tones held the old warmth.

"Nonsense, Jack, stay here and have some with me. I haven't any fatted calf to kill for you, but I can fry a couple of eggs and give you some good coffee, and——"

"I can't drink coffee," Jack answered, "but if you really want me to stay, I'll be glad to. I—I'd rather not go to training-table this morning."

"Course I want you to," answered Anthony. "Why can't you drink coffee, though?"

"Training."

"What? Why, coffee never hurt any one; best thing in the world, coffee; strengthening, elevating, enlarging; good for body and brain. But tell me all about your vacation."

And while Anthony bustled about over his little stove, handling pots and pans with a deftness remarkable in a person usually so awkward, Jack recounted his experiences rather shamefacedly.

"Right about the professor, wasn't I?" interrupted Anthony once.

"Yes, you were. He's mighty good, Anthony. He treated me as though I was the President; and so did his mother and sister. I had a bully little room with an open fireplace in it and blue roses all over the walls and all sorts of easy chairs made out of rattan stuff; and the sun just flooded in the window

this morning. My, but I wish I lived there all the time!"

"Sounds fine," answered Anthony. "All aboard, now; draw up to the table and wade in. Guess you'll have to use the rocker, unless you'd rather have this. Here's the sugar. How about— Pshaw, you're not going to drink coffee, are you? Have some water in the toothbrush mug? No? All right. Have an egg; that's right, just slide it off. These rolls are good; I sprinkle the tops with water and heat 'em up on the stove. Sorry I haven't more to offer you, though. Well, Jack, I'm glad you ran across White and came back. You'd been sorry—afterward—if you'd gone home; and so would I. And, by the way, what was it that set you going? What happened at the table yesterday morning? Your note was lacking in details."

Jack told about Gilberth's behavior and Anthony's eyes darkened behind his spectacles.

"Ugly brute!" he muttered. "Ought to be spanked. But— Look here, don't mind him, Jack; I don't think he's going to trouble you much after this. Just keep out of his way."

"I'll try to. If—if he was a freshman, or even a soph, I'd fight him; but I can't fight a senior!"

"Huh! You won't have to; he's going to behave himself after this," said Anthony grimly.

"Well, I don't know; anyhow, I'm going to stick it out now, no matter what happens," Jack said stoutly. "That's my last try at running away. If it hadn't been for forgetting my money, I guess I'd have gone. Funny how it happened, wasn't it? The worst of it is, I thought I'd left the money in my trunk, but I've looked and it isn't there; I can't find it anywhere. It was about all I had. I guess dad will be madder than a hatter when I write home for more."

"That's too bad," said Anthony. "If you want a little—a dollar or two, you know—to go on until you hear from home, I can let you have it as well as not."

"You're awfully good," answered Jack gratefully. "But it would be a nice thing for me to borrow from you, wouldn't it? Don't you think I know how hard up you are?"

"Oh, well, you could pay it back, you know. If you'd rather, you could give me a mortgage on your clothes," he added, smiling.

"Then, if my money didn't come, you might for-clothes," laughed Jack.

"Running away from school seems to sharpen your wits," said Anthony. "Have another egg? Won't take a minute. Good; I like my guests to have appetites.'

"You'd have one yourself if you'd been hauled out of a nice, soft bed at half-past six!"

"Guess I would; but I wouldn't make bad puns."

Presently, while the egg was sputtering in the pan, Jack asked, with a trace of embarrassment:

"Did you—get that watch-charm?"

"Yes; much obliged," was the answer. "Guess I'd better give it back now. Won't need it to remember you by if you're in the same hut with me, eh?"

"I—I'd rather you did keep it, though, and wear it, if you don't mind. Did you put it on your chain?"

The fork fell into the pan, and Anthony fished it out with much muttering before he answered. Then—

"Why, no, I didn't, Jack. You see——"

"I know; it isn't very beautiful; just one I had."

"That isn't the reason," said Anthony without turning around. "Fact is, I'm not wearing my watch just now."

"Oh, aren't you? Why—what——"

"Well, a fellow can't have money to lend and a gold watch at the same time. Just at present I'm a money-lender."

"Oh, I see," Jack replied. But, nevertheless, he didn't look satisfied with the explanation, and when Anthony returned to the breakfast-table with the egg

he had been frying the two finished the meal almost in silence.

Thanks to the secrecy of the three persons who alone knew of Jack's absence from Centerport, his return to the training-table at lunch-time occasioned no surprise. Joe Perkins looked bewildered for a moment, but said nothing. King called across the board and asked Jack where he'd been since the day before, and Jack calmly replied that he'd been home with Professor White overnight. Several pairs of eyebrows went up incredulously, but no one voiced his doubts. Gilberth took absolutely no notice of Jack, and, at least in so far as the latter was concerned, the meal went off pleasantly. He had expected to be called to account by the trainer, but Simson had eyes of his own and said nothing as long as luncheon was in progress. When it was over he questioned the captain. After a moment of hesitation, Joe told the trainer the facts of Jack's absence as he knew them.

"I think," he said, "that the best thing to do is to take no notice this time. Weatherby may turn out a good man for us if he can get his mind on his work. But if this badgering continues he won't be worth a continental; he's all up in the air. Maybe you can give him a good word now and then, 'Baldy'; the poor dub needs it all right."

"Sure, I can," answered the trainer. "Give the lad a chance; why not? I doubt he's varsity material, cap, but he's a decent spoken lad enough."

Tracy Gilberth walked back to his room after luncheon feeling very dissatisfied with life. He had not yet forgiven Joe for the lecture which the latter had delivered to him the day before. Tracy felt deeply wronged. He really believed that when he had publicly affronted Jack Weatherby that he had been performing a service to the college; that it was his duty to protest against the presence at the university of a fellow who had shown himself to be a coward. Tracy had a rather good opinion of himself and of his importance, and had never doubted that, since others had failed to act in the matter, it was his place to step to the front. The wigging he had received from Joe had surprised as well as disgruntled him, and his vanity still smarted.

And what increased his annoyance was the fact that he had been "called down" by the one fellow of all whom Tracy really held in affection, and who, or so Tracy argued, should have been the very last to oppose him. Never before had the two, whose friendship dated back from their sophomore year, come so near to quarreling as they had yesterday. Differences of opinion they frequently had, but Tracy always retired from what-

ever position he held at the first sign of displeasure on the part of the other. But yesterday Tracy's back-down had been incomplete; to-day he was not decided whether to do as Joe wanted him to and leave the obnoxious Weatherby strictly alone or to show his resentment by continuing his righteous persecution of that youth with some more than usually severe affront. In fact, Tracy hovered on the verge of open mutiny when, after climbing the first flight of stairs in Grace Hall, he turned to the left down the broad corridor and kicked open the unlatched door of his study.

"Hello!" he exclaimed.

"Hello!" was the response from the depths of a big leather armchair, and Anthony, who had been reclining with widely stretched legs and reading a magazine, placed the latter back on the mahogany writing-table and calmly faced his host. The two knew each other well enough to nod in passing, but never before had Anthony paid Tracy a visit, and the latter's evident surprise was natural enough.

"Found your door open," explained Anthony, "so I came in and waited. Wanted to see you a minute or two, Gilberth."

"That's all right; glad you made yourself comfortable," answered the other.

"Nice rooms you've got," continued the visitor.

"Oh, they do well enough," Tracy replied carelessly.

As a matter of fact they were the handsomest in college, and he knew it and was proud of it. The study was furnished throughout in mahogany upholstered in light-green leather, a combination of colors at first glance a trifle disconcerting, but which, when viewed in connection with the walls and draperies, was quite harmonious. The walls were covered to the height of five feet with denim of dark green. Above this a mahogany plate-rail ran about the apartment and held a few old pewter platters and tankards, some good pieces of luster-ware and a half-dozen bowls and pitchers of Japanese glaze. Above the shelf, buckram of a dull shade of mahogany red continued to the ceiling, where it gave way to cartridge-paper of a still lighter shade. The draperies at doors and windows were of the prevailing tones. The effect of the whole was one of cheerful dignity. The room was not overcrowded with furniture and the walls held a few pictures, and those of the best. There was a refreshing absence of small photographs and knickknacks. Tracy was proud of his taste in the matter of decoration and furnishing and proud of the result as here shown. Anthony liked the room without understanding it. Perhaps the little whimsical smile that curved his lips was summoned by

a mental comparison of the present apartment and his own chamber with its cracked and stained whitewashed walls and povern fittings.

"You wanted to see me, you said?" prompted Tracy.

"Yes," answered the visitor. "Maybe it will simplify matters if I start out by telling you that Jack Weatherby's a particular friend of mine."

"Oh," said Tracy. "Well?"

"Well, don't you think you've bothered him enough, Gilberth?"

"Look here, Tidball, I don't like your tone," said Tracy with asperity.

"Can't help it," answered Anthony. "I don't like the way you've been hazing Weatherby. Now we know each other's grievance."

"What I've done to Weatherby doesn't concern you," said Tracy hotly. "And I'm not to be dictated to. The fellow's a coward and a bounder."

"Don't know what bounder is," answered the other dryly. "Doesn't sound nice, though. Suppose we stop calling names? I might lose my temper and call you something, and you mightn't like it, either. But I didn't come up here to quarrel with you; don't like to quarrel with a man in his room; doesn't seem polite, does it? What I came to say is this,

Gilberth: leave Weatherby alone or you'll have me to deal with."

"Is that a threat?"

"No, I guess not; just a statement of fact."

"Do you think I'm afraid of you?" demanded Tracy angrily.

"Guess not; keep on tormenting Weatherby and I'll know you're not."

"Now, look here, Tidball, if you want a row, you can have it right off. You don't need to wait and see what happens to your precious friend. I'll fight you any time you like. Do you want a fight?"

"No, not particularly," answered Anthony, with his most exasperating drawl. "Never fought any one in my life. Wouldn't know how to go about it, I guess. Even——"

"Well, you'll know all about it mighty soon if you don't get out of here!"

"Don't think I shall. Haven't any intention of fighting."

"Haven't you, indeed? Well, what, I'd like to know, are you hinting at?"

"Not hinting at all. You leave Weatherby alone or I'll catch you in the yard and wallop you with a trunk-strap; but," he added grimly, "there won't be any fighting."

He drew his long length out of the chair and took up his hat. Tracy, pale with anger, eyed him silently a moment. Then he leaped forward and sent him spinning back against the chair with a blow on the shoulder. The next moment he felt himself lifted bodily from his feet, turned head over heels, and deposited in that inglorious position on the broad leather couch. When things stopped revolving he saw Tidball's calm face bending over him and felt his wrists held tightly together by fingers that grasped them like steel bands. He struggled violently until his opponent placed a bony knee on his chest. Then he subsided.

"Now keep still and listen to me," said Tidball in quiet, undisturbed tones. "I'm a peaceable fellow, and don't fight. But if you don't remember what I've told you, I'm going to grab you just like this some day—and it'll be when there are plenty of men looking on, too—and I'm going to spank you with a trunk-strap. If you don't believe me," he added with a slight grin, "I'll show you the strap!"

"I'll—I'll kill——"

"No, you won't do a thing," the other interrupted sternly. "You'll stay just where you are and behave yourself. If you don't, I'll lock you up in your bedroom; and that's a liberty I don't want to take."

He released Tracy and stepped back. Tracy leaped

to his feet, but something in the look of the eyes behind the steel-bowed spectacles persuaded him to keep his distance. Anthony picked up his hat from the floor, dusted it tenderly with his elbow, and walked to the door.

"Sorry there was any trouble, Gilberth," he said soberly. "Maybe I lost my temper; it's a mean one sometimes. Think over what I said." He closed the door noiselessly behind him, and Tracy, shaking and choking with wrath, groaned futilely.

CHAPTER XII

A FLY TO LEFT-FIELDER

JACK sat on the players' bench, chin in hands, elbows on knees, and watched Centerport High School go down in defeat. It was the first game of the season for the varsity, and, judged by high standards, it wasn't anything to be proud of. At the end of the sixth inning the score was 9—0 in Erskine's favor, and not one of the nine runs had been earned. The error column on the score-sheet was so filled with little round dots that, from where Jack sat, it looked as though some one had sprinkled it with pepper. If, so far, there had been any encouraging features they were undoubtedly Joe Perkins's catching of Gilberth's erratic curves and Knox's work at shortstop. The outfield had conscientiously muffed every fly that had come its way, and only the quick recovery of the ball had, on several occasions, prevented High School from scoring.

Joe Perkins looked disgusted whenever he walked to the bench, and the expression on the countenance

of Hanson, the head coach, was one of bewilderment. "It's simply wonderful!" Jack heard him confide to Joe. "I don't see how they do it. I can understand how they can muff every other ball, say; but the whole-souled manner in which they let every one slide through their fingers is marvelous!" And Joe had smiled weakly and turned away.

When the men trotted out for the beginning of the seventh, Jack slid along the bench to where Patterson, the team's manager, was scowling over the score-book. Jack had never spoken to Patterson, and a week ago he would have hesitated a long while before risking a snub by doing so. But since his return from his "visit" with Professor White the treatment he had received from the other members of the team had been so decent that he was ceasing to look upon himself as a Pariah and was regaining some degree of assurance. He studied the book over the manager's shoulder a moment. Then he asked:

"Pretty poor, isn't it? Do you think Perkins will put any more subs in?"

Patterson glanced around with a flicker of surprise in his eyes. But his answer was friendly enough:

"I don't know what he'll do. But if the subs can play any better than the men he's got in there he'd better give 'em a chance. Where do you play?"

"Almost anywhere, I guess. They've had me at left-field, right-field, and second base. I guess I'll be in the outfield if I get in at all."

"You'd better go out there and help Northup," said the manager, as he credited Motter, at first base, with his third error. "I don't suppose it matters much whether High School scores or not; only I would like to see Erskine have a clean record this year. And to get scored on in the first game looks pretty rotten. Who made that assist?"

"Stiles. Can't Gilberth pitch better than he's doing to-day?"

"Of course he can. He's all right when he tries; he evidently thinks this game isn't worth while. But I'll wager that Hanson will have something to say to him afterward. Side's out. Stiles at bat!"

Erskine managed to find High School's pitcher to good effect in the last of the seventh and piled up four more runs, two of them fairly earned. When Erskine trotted into the field again Hanson and Perkins had materially altered her batting list. King, who had been playing in left-field, went into the pitcher's box, and Jack was sent out to left-field. Griffin succeeded Joe as catcher, Mears took Motter's place at first, and Smith went in at shortstop.

Jack watched events from his position over near

the rail fence and was never once disturbed; for King retired the opposing batsmen in one, two, three order, and the sides again changed places. Jack didn't have a chance to show what he could do with the stick, for High School, following Erskine's lead, put a new man into the box, and the new man puzzled the batsmen so that only one reached first, and was left there when Billings, third-baseman, popped a short fly into the hands of High School's shortstop. Jack trotted back to the rail fence very disgusted.

It was the last inning. The sun was getting low and the chill of early evening caused Jack to swing his arms and prance around to keep the blood circulating. Over by the bench he could see them packing the bats away, and a little stream of spectators was filling around behind the back fence toward the gate. High School had reached the tail-end of her batting list again, and, to all appearances, the game was as good as finished. But last innings can't always be depended upon to behave as expected. The present one proved this. High School's first man at bat heroically tried to smash a long fly into outfield and, all by good luck, bunted the ball into the dust at his feet. After a moment of bewilderment, he put out for first and reached it at the same time as the ball. High School's noisy supporters took new courage and awoke the echoes with their fan-

tastic war-whoop. King looked bothered for an instant, and in that instant struck the next batsman on the elbow. The latter, rubbing the bruise and grinning joyfully, trotted to first and the man ahead took second.

"Huh," muttered Jack, rubbing his chilled hands together, "something doing, after all."

But King settled down then, and, after three attempts to catch the High School runner napping at second base, struck out the next man very nicely. The succeeding one, finding a straight ball, bunted it toward first, and, while he was tagged out by King, advanced the runners. High School's supporters, gathered into a little bunch on the stand, waved their flags and ribbons, and shouted frantically. For surely, with men on third and second and their best batter selecting his stick, a run was not unlikely. Hanson shouted a command and King, repeating it, motioned the fielders in. Jack obeyed, doubtingly, for he had watched the present player and believed him capable of hitting hard. And so, although he made pretense of shortening field, he remained pretty much where he had been. And a moment later he was heartily glad of it.

For the High School batsman, a tall, lanky, but very determined-looking youth, found King's first delivery and raced for first. Along the base-lines the coaches were shouting unintelligible things and flourish-

ing their caps. The runners on third and second were running home. In the outfield Bissell, center-fielder, was speeding back, cutting over into Jack's territory as he went. Jack, too, was going up the field, yet cautiously, for the shadows were gathering and it was hard to tell where the little black speck up there against the purple sky was going to fall. Yet when, with a final glance over his shoulder, he took up his position, and heard Bissell, panting from his run, cry: "All yours, Weatherby!" he never doubted that he would catch it. To Jack a fly was merely a baseball that required catching; and he was there to catch it. So he took a step or two forward, put up his hands, and pulled it down. Then he threw it to second-baseman and trotted in.

When he reached the plate the applause had died away and the remainder of the audience was hurrying off the field. The players were finding sweaters and, having thrown them over their shoulders, were hurrying across to the locker-house. Jack, searching for his own, heard Hanson's voice behind him:

"Well, Joe, we've got one man who can catch a ball, eh?"

Jack knew that he wasn't supposed to hear that remark, and so he took his time at pulling his white sweater out of the pile. When he turned, the head

coach and captain were walking away. Jack followed, feeling very thankful that he had not missed his one chance of the game. As he entered the door he almost ran against the coach. Hanson smiled into his face as he stepped aside.

"That was a very fair catch, Weatherby," he said.

And a moment later, when, wrapped only in a big bath-towel, he was hurrying to the shower-room, "Baldy" Simson clapped him on the back with a big hand.

"That's the lad now," he cried heartily, adding then his invariable caution: "Easy with the hot water, and dón't go to sleep!"

At dinner-table Jack thought the other fellows looked at him with something like respect. And all, he reflected, because he had caught a ball he couldn't help catching!

CHAPTER XIII

JOE IS PESSIMISTIC

"HAVE you seen the editorial in the Purple?" asked King.

Joe Perkins, who had pushed his book away as the other entered his study, swung around in his chair and shook his head.

"About the mass-meeting?" he asked. "No, I haven't seen the paper yet. What does it say?"

Gregory King leaned over the table until the inky-smelling sheets of the college weekly were under the green glass shade of the student-lamp.

"Listen, then, benighted one! 'It is to be hoped that every student who can possibly do so will attend the mass-meeting to be held on Wednesday evening next in Grace Hall for the purpose of raising money for the expenses of the University baseball team. A victory over Robinson this spring decisive enough to obliterate——'"

"Hear! hear!" cried Joe.

"Yes, elegant word, isn't it?" grinned the other. "'To obliterate the stigma of last year's defeat is what every friend of the college hopes for and expects. But unless enough money is placed at the disposal of the management, to meet the expenses of the team, such a victory can not be secured. The nine has never been self-supporting and every spring it has started in with a deficit of from fifty to a hundred and fifty dollars, which has been paid by the Athletic Committee from the general fund. Heretofore the Committee has, besides making good the deficit, paid over to the baseball management sufficient money to carry the team through the first half of the season. This spring, however, the Committee is unable to do this. The football receipts last fall were scarcely more than half as large as usual, while the expenses were much greater. As a result, the sum at the disposal of the baseball team, the track team, and the crew is extremely small, and the former has received as its share the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars only—a sum not nearly sufficient to carry it through the first half of the season.

"'It becomes necessary, therefore, to secure funds from some other source. Subscriptions have been invited from the alumni, but the result of this step is uncertain. A popular subscription is necessary and will be asked at the meeting on Wednesday. The amount

required to insure the success of the nine is not large, and it is the duty of the student body to see that it is raised before the meeting is adjourned. Manager Patterson will make a statement of the association's condition, and there will be addresses by Dean Levatt, Professor Nast, Coach Hanson, Captain Perkins, A. Z. Tidball, '04, and others. It is to be hoped that the meeting will be attended by every member of the university.'"

"Not bad," commented Joe. "But whether Patterson has made a mistake by stating frankly that the meeting is called to secure money remains to be seen."

"What else could he say? The fellows aren't going to be gulled into thinking that they're invited to a mass-meeting to play ping-pong!"

"I know, but there are lots of fellows who won't come if they know they're to be asked to dive into their pockets."

"Then let them stay away," answered King forcibly. "Any chap that isn't willing to give a dollar or two to beat Robinson isn't worth bothering with!"

"I dare say; but we've got to have a lot of money, and if every fellow of that sort stays away—" He shook his head doubtfully.

"Oh, get out! You're pessimistic this evening.

Cheer up; the tide's coming in! We'll get all the money we need, and lots more besides. You'll see."

"Hope so. Fact is, Greg, I'm a bit down in the mouth over the showing we made Saturday. If we don't do better Wednesday I sha'n't blame the fellows if they refuse to pony up for us. A nine that plays ball like a lot of girls doesn't deserve support."

"Well, we were pretty rotten Saturday, Joe, and that's the truth. But we'll stand by you better next time. We'll give a good exhibition of union-made, hand-sewn baseball on Wednesday that'll tickle the college to death. By the way, there's a long fairy tale from Collegetown here in the Purple about Robinson's team. To read it you'd think they expected to walk all over us and everybody else. They're talking about beating Artmouth next week! How's that for immortal cheek?"

"Oh, they've got a good nine, Greg, and they know it. And you and I know it. We might as well face it, too."

"Well, what if they have? Great Scott, man, haven't they had good nines lots of times before and been beaten out of their boots? What do we care for their old Voses and Condits and 'Hard-hitting Hopkinses'? Maybe we've got a good battery ourselves, and a man or two who can slug the ball!"

"Maybe we have," answered Joe dryly, "but you couldn't just name them, could you?"

"Certainly I can name them! You're just as good a catcher as that Condit wonder of theirs. And Gilberth can pitch all around Vose, when he wants to. And——"

"Yes, when he wants to," said Joe significantly.

"Well, he will want to when it comes to Robinson," said King.

"Perhaps. And how about the hard sluggers?"

"Oh, well, there's Motter, and Billings, and——"

"Yourself; you're a better batsman than either of them, Greg. But there's no use in running down Hopkins; he's a wonder at the bat; and we've got to get busy and turn out a few fellows like him. Saturday there wasn't more than three decent hits made in the whole idiotic game."

"My cheerless friend, please forget Saturday," begged King. "It wasn't nice, I know, but it showed up the weak spots, and that's something to be thankful for."

"Not when there's nothing but spots," lamented Joe.

"Besides, we kept them from scoring; and for a while it looked as though we couldn't."

"And even that was just a piece of good luck."

"Good luck? Why, it didn't seem so to me. I never saw a fielder look more certain of making a catch than Weatherby did. And the way he pulled down that ball was mighty pretty, too."

"I don't mean that it was luck for him; I mean that it was just by luck that I put him in your place when you went into the box; I almost sent Lowe out there. If I had it's dollars to cents he wouldn't have judged that ball so as to have caught it."

"Well, all's well that ends well, old chap. Cheer up! By the way, I was mighty glad Weatherby made that catch and kept our slate clean; for his sake, I mean. I've noticed that yesterday and to-day the fellows at the table have been very decent to him. I guess he rather made a hit with them Saturday."

"I'm glad of that," Joe responded heartily. "To tell the truth, Greg, Weatherby's been bothering me a good deal; Hanson and I picked him out for a good man, and I think he is, but all this badgering by the fellows has made him pretty near worthless. I hope to goodness it's done with now."

"It's been Tracy more than any one else," said King. "He's rather overdone it, I think."

"I should say so! The trouble with Tracy is that he gets it into his thick head that he's a sort of public conscience, and you can't get it out. I don't think he

really intends to be mean; I've known him to do several mighty decent things—kind-hearted, you know."

"Seems as though his sense of proportion was out of gear; and you can't faze him, either."

"Well, I don't know; sometimes I manage to jar him a bit. I got at him last week and asked him to go easy on Weatherby, and so far he's done it. I put it to him on the score of justice and that sort of thing, you know. I've noticed, by the way, that you've been kind of taking Weatherby's part lately. Do you like him?"

"I don't know whether I do or don't," answered King slowly. "I think maybe I could like him very well if he'd give me a chance, but the trouble is he won't let you get near him. He's the most independent, stand-offish sort of chap ever."

"I know. It's rather against him, that kind of thing. But I fancy, Greg, that that manner of his is sort of defensive; I don't believe he's really so independent as he is—well, shy. He thinks fellows don't care to know him and so puts on that let-me-alone air just to hide the fact that he's downhearted."

"Do you? Well, maybe your right. It never occurred to me."

"Yes; and something Professor White said the other day bears me out. He came up to see me about

Weatherby. It seems he's taken rather a shine to him, and had him home with him overnight last week. He says that Weatherby's frightfully cut up over the way the fellows have been treating him; thinks no one wants to have anything to do with him on account of that affair down at the river, you know, and is just about ready to throw up the sponge and light out. In fact—" Joe stopped, remembering that Anthony had requested him not to talk of Jack's flight. "Anyhow, it seems rather a shame, don't you think? The chap's a nice-looking, gentlemanly sort, and apparently has lots of pluck, in spite of what happened at the wharf that day."

"That's what I think. I believe the truth of that business is that Weatherby doesn't know how to swim, Joe."

"Really? Did he ever say so?"

"Oh, thunder, no! He never's talked about it to me; I'd be scared to death to ask him. But that seems a reasonable sort of explanation, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does. And it's funny that it never occurred to me. Somehow, you take it for granted here that every fellow knows how to swim; we're such a lot of water-rats, you know. I believe you've hit it, Greg. But if that's the case, why didn't he out and say so?"

"Well, I don't know. Maybe we didn't give him a chance at first, and then, when he did have a show, maybe he got spunky and wouldn't. It's the sort of thing I could understand his doing."

"Yes, it is. Well, anyhow, he's cut up more rumpus and made more worry than any freshie I ever knew. And I hope to goodness it's over. I want him to play ball. Going? Don't forget to drum up the meeting. Bring a crowd with you and start the enthusiasm early in the game. And, by the way, if you ever have a chance, you might just try and find out about Weatherby; whether he can swim, you know. So long, Greg."

Jack would have been distinctly surprised had he known that he was the subject of so much discussion. He was beginning to congratulate himself that the men with whom he associated seemed to have forgotten the unpleasant incident, and were, in a manner, making his acquaintance all over again. There was no denying the fact that since his performance of Saturday on the diamond the fellows at the training-table had shown themselves very friendly toward him. Of old he had usually eaten his meals in silence, save for an occasional word with Joe or King or the trainer. Nowadays the fellows greeted him as one of themselves, included him in their conversation, and even asked his opinion some-

times. And unconsciously he was bidding for their friendship. He no longer answered all inquiries with monosyllables, but forgot his rôle of injured innocence and entered into the talk with sprightliness and interest. Once he had even made a joke. It was a good joke, but its effect was embarrassing. Every one was so surprised that for a full quarter of a minute not a sound greeted it. Then the table broke into laughter. But by that time Jack was all self-consciousness once more, and for the rest of the meal ate in silence.

But his shyness wore off again, and by the middle of the week his companions had adopted a way of listening when he spoke as though what he had to say was worth hearing. The effect of this was like a tonic to Jack's vanity. He began to recover his naturally good spirits and the change in him was noticeable. Anthony saw and was delighted.

The friendship betweeen him and the younger boy had worked back into its old lines. Sometimes, more and more infrequently as time passed, Jack thought he could detect a difference in Anthony's attitude toward him; fancied that the other was reserved in manner. But the difference, if difference there was, was slight and did not seriously impair Jack's enjoyment of Anthony's friendship.

Anthony himself in those days was not aware that

he showed at times any of the doubts that assailed him. He did not mean to. He had argued with himself over the matter of the lost watch and had at length practically convinced himself that, despite all evidences against his friend, Jack was not guilty of theft. It is probable that even had Anthony detected Jack in the act of stealing he would still have kept much of his liking for the boy, even while detesting his offense. Anthony was big enough morally to view wrong-doing with pity as well as disfavor, and his affection for Jack—a big-hearted, generous affection—would have weighed in the boy's favor.

But Anthony had made up his mind to believe in the other's innocence, and believe he did. Sometimes the doubts would creep back despite him, and it was at such times that Jack believed he detected a difference in Anthony's manner toward him. Meanwhile, Anthony had purchased a wonderful alarm-clock for the sum of eighty-five cents; wonderful for the reason that it gained an hour each day as long as it stood on its feet, and lost twenty minutes each day if laid comfortably on its back. Anthony corrected it every evening by Jack's watch, and persevered in his efforts to lead it back into a life of veracity and usefulness.

"There's some position," he declared, "in which that thing will keep exact time. 'Tisn't on its feet, and

'tisn't on its back; it's somewhere betweeen. Patience and study will find the solution.

So he propped it at various angles with his books, and even laid it on its head, but whether the numerals XII pointed toward the floor, the ceiling, or the dormer-window the result was always surprising and never satisfactory. And finally, after he had once awakened and prepared his breakfast before discovering that the alarm had gone off at five instead of half-past six, he gave up the struggle, settled the timepiece firmly on its little legs, and accustomed himself to being always one hour ahead of the rest of the world.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MASS-MEETING

On the Wednesday for which the mass-meeting was called Jack returned to the house at quarter after five, and, as was his custom, stopped in at Anthony's room to spend half an hour before dinner. Anthony had improvised a window-seat out of a packing-case, covering it with an old red table-cloth and installing upon it his one cushion, a not over-soft and very flamboyant creation in purple and white. When Jack entered he found Anthony perched thereon before the open casement. The seat was not very long and so the occupant was obliged to either let his legs hang over the edge or fold them up beneath him. At present he had adopted the latter tactics, and a ludicrous figure he presented. Jack subsided on to the edge of the bed and giggled with delight until Anthony tossed the book he was studying at his head.

"What are you crying about?" he demanded.

"I'm not cr—crying," gurgled Jack. "I'm la—laughing at you."

"What's the matter with me?"

"You look so—so funny!"

"Do I?" Anthony grinned and unfolded himself. "I was thinking a while ago that I was like a pair of scissors I saw once. The blades tucked back against the handles. How'd the game come out?"

"Pretty well; seven to nothing. Millport came pretty near getting a run in the fourth, but after that she didn't have a ghost of a show. I didn't, either. I didn't get in for a minute; just sat on that old bench and looked on and nearly froze to death."

"Too bad," sympathized Anthony.

"Wasn't it? However, I don't care very much. Hanson sat with me a while and we had a long talk. He knows a whole lot about baseball; stuff I never thought of; scientific part of the game, you know."

"Hanged if I do!" answered Anthony. "I don't know a baseball from a longstop."

"A what?" gasped Jack.

"Longstop; isn't that it?"

"Shortstop, you mean."

"Well, knew it was some kind of a stop. Might as well call it one thing as the other, I guess."

"Why don't you come out and see a game some day?"

"Going to some afternoon, when I've nothing to do."

"Huh! I guess you'll never come, then. You're always grinding."

"Oh, I'll take a vacation some Saturday and go and watch you play."

"Don't know whether you will or not," said Jack dolefully. "King played in left-field all the game to-day. Pretty nearly every sub except me went in. I wish they'd give me a place to try for and let me see if I can't make it. I hope, though, they don't put me out in the field. Perkins told me yesterday that there's no use in my trying for pitcher this year, and I guess he's right. Gilberth played a great game to-day; struck seven men out and gave only two bases."

"How are you and he getting on nowadays?" Anthony asked.

"All right. He never has anything to say to me, and I let him alone."

"Guess he won't trouble you any more," said Anthony.

"Perhaps not. Sometimes, though, I think he's saving up for something particularly unpleasant. I don't care, though. He can go hang."

Anthony closed the window, drew down the stained green shade, and lighted the gas-stove. Jack lay back

on the bed for a time and watched the dinner preparations in silence.

"What's the *pièce de résistance* to-night?" he finally asked, as there came a sputtering from the pan.

"Hamburger steak with onions," answered Anthony.

"Ugh!"

"Don't you like it?" asked his host in surprise.

"Not a bit; and I don't like the beastly smell, either. So I'm going home." He stretched his arms luxuriously and sat up. Then, "Did you ever wish you were rich, Anthony?" he asked.

Anthony paused a moment with fork outstretched, and looked thoughtfully across the room. Finally, he shook his head.

"No, I don't believe I ever did. What's the use?"

"No use, I suppose. But I have, often. I wish so now. Do you know what I'd do if I had fifty thousand dollars?"

"No; but something silly, I guess," answered the other, prodding the steak till it sizzled.

"Well, I'd throw that foolish, lying clock out of the window and get your watch back. Then I'd take you to—to—Boston, I guess, and buy you a ripping good dinner for once in your life. We'd have quail and asparagus, and— Do you like chocolate éclairs?"

"Don't know; never ate any. What are they like?"

"Well, we'd have them, anyway. Wish I had one now. And— But I'm getting hungry, myself."

"Better stay and have some Hamburger and onions," advised Anthony, with a smile. But Jack fled toward the door, ostentatiously holding his nose.

At half past seven they set out for the mass-meeting together. When they had crossed the Common and had entered the yard they found themselves in one of a number of little eddies of laughing, chattering fellows that flowed across the campus and merged in front of Grace Hall into a stream that filled the doorway and staircase from side to side.

"Going to have a full house," observed Anthony.

At the door of the meeting-room they ran into Joe Perkins. He grabbed Anthony and sent him, under charge of Patterson, the manager, to a seat on the platform. Then he put a detaining hand on Jack's arm.

"Cheer like everything, Weatherby!" he whispered.

Then a six-foot sophomore, leading a flying wedge consisting of a handful of his classmates, bucked Jack between the shoulders and he went rushing up the aisle, tossing the crowd to either side, until he managed to avoid the men behind by slipping into a vacant seat.

The big sophomore banged him on the shoulder as he charged on. "Bully interference!" he cried. Followed by his companions, he leaped over the intervening row of occupied seats and subsided in a heap among a little throng of delighted friends. "Down here!" he yelled. Some one imitated a referee's whistle and a falsetto voice called: "Third down and a yard to gain!"

Jack found himself seated next to a group of second-nine men. The little freshman Clover was his immediate neighbor, and beyond that youth sat Showell, the fellow whom Jack had fooled with his pitching on that first day of outdoor practise. They had met but seldom since then, but Showell had never missed an opportunity to annoy Jack, if possible, or, failing that, to show his dislike. His annoyances usually took the form of allusions to the incident at the river, plain enough, yet so petty that Jack never regarded them as worth noticing. Clover greeted Jack with evident pleasure. The latter returned his greeting and then nodded to the fellows farther along. Only Showell failed to respond. Turning to the man on the other side of him he asked:

"Been down to the river lately?"

"Oh, cut it out," growled his neighbor, scowling at him.

"Cut what out?" asked Showell, pretending great bewilderment. "The river?"

"Let him alone, can't you?" whispered the other.

"If you can't, take your old jokes somewhere else," advised Clover. Jack had not missed any of it, and for the first time Showell's pleasantries aroused his anger.

"What's the matter with you dubs?" Showell asked, grinning. "Can't I talk about the river? All right, then, I'll talk about the weather. Nice, dry evening, isn't it? Any of you fellows get your feet wet?"

Jack touched Clover on the shoulder. "Do you mind changing seats with me?" he asked. Clover looked doubtful a moment; then he got up and Jack slipped along into his place. Showell watched the proceedings with surprise, and when he found Jack beside him turned his gaze uneasily ahead and for the rest of the evening attempted to look unconscious of the other's presence. But, what with the grins and whispering of his friends, it is doubtful if he enjoyed himself.

The senior president made his little speech and introduced the dean. The latter, who never was much of an orator, said just what everybody knew he would say, and was succeeded by Patterson, the manager. Patterson explained the needs of the Baseball Associa-

tion, and Professor Nast, chairman of the Athletic Committee, followed and urged the students to come to the support of the team. Neither his remarks nor Patterson's awakened any enthusiasm, and the cheers which followed were plainly to order. Some one at the rear of the hall started a football song and one by one the audience took up the refrain. Perkins, who had stepped to the front of the platform, paused and glanced inquiringly at the head coach. The latter shook his head and Joe turned away again.

"Let them sing," whispered Hanson. "It'll warm them up."

But as soon as it was discovered that there was no opposition the singing died away. King was on his feet then, calling for cheers for Captain Perkins. They were given loudly enough, but lacked spontaneity. Joe's speech was short, but had the right ring, and several allusions to past successes of the nine and future victories awakened applause. But when he had taken his seat again and the cheering, in spite of the efforts of King and Bissell and others of the team, had ceased, it was evident that the meeting was bound to be a flat failure unless something was done to wake it up.

Hanson, who was down as the next speaker, called Joe to him, and for a minute they whispered together. Then Joe crossed the stage and spoke to Anthony.

At the back of the room there was a perceptible impatience; several fellows had already tiptoed out, and there was much scraping of feet. Joe heard it and held up his hand. Then Anthony lifted himself up out of the ridiculously small chair in which he had been seated and moved awkwardly to the front of the platform. Instantly there was the sound of clapping, succeeded by the cry of "A—a—ay, Tidball!" Anthony settled his spectacles on his nose and thrust his big hands into his trouser's pockets.

"Good old Tidball!" cried some one; the remark summoned laughter and clapping; men on their feet and edging toward the door paused and turned back; those who had kept their seats settled themselves more comfortably and looked expectant. The senior class president jumped to his feet and called for a cheer, and the response was encouragingly hearty. Joe threw a satisfied glance at Hanson and the latter nodded. The tumult died down and Anthony, who had been facing the gathering with calm and serious countenance, began to speak.

CHAPTER XV

ANTHONY ON BASEBALL

"WELL," commenced Anthony, in his even, deliberate drawl, "you had your chance to get out, and didn't take it. I guess you're in for it. I've been requested to speak to you about baseball. I told Captain Perkins that I didn't know a baseball from a frozen turnip, but he said that made it all the better; that if I didn't know what I was talking about you would realize that I was absolutely unprejudiced and my words would carry more weight. I said, 'How are you going to get the fellows to listen to me?' He said, 'We'll lock the doors.' I guess they're locked."

Half his audience turned to look, and the rest laughed.

"Anyhow," Anthony continued, "he kept his part of the agreement, and so I'll have to keep mine. I've said frankly that I know nothing about baseball, and I hope that you will all pardon any mistakes I may make in discussing the subject. I never saw but one

game, and after it was over I knew less about it than I did before. A fellow I knew played—well, I don't know just what he did play; most of the time he danced around a bag of salt or something that some one had left out on the grass. There were three of those bags, and his was the one on the southeast corner. When the game was over he asked me how I liked it. I said, 'It looks to me like a good game for a lunatic asylum.' He said I showed ignorance; that it was the best game in the world, and just full up and slopping over with science. I didn't argue with him. But I've always thought that if I had to play baseball I'd choose to be the fellow that wears a black alpaca coat and does the talking. Seems to me he's the only one that remains sane. I asked my friend if he was the keeper; he said no, he was the umpire."

By this time the laughter was almost continuous, but Anthony's expression of calm gravity remained unbroken. At times he appeared surprised and disturbed by the bursts of laughter; and a small freshman in the front row toppled out of his seat and had to be thumped on the back. Even the dean was chuckling.

"Well, science has always been a weak point with me, and I guess that's why I'm not able to understand the science of hitting a ball with a wagon-spoke and running over salt-bags. But I'm not so narrow-minded

as to affirm that because I can't see the science it isn't there. You've all heard about Abraham Lincoln and the book-agent, I guess. The book-agent wanted him to write a testimonial for his book. Lincoln wrote it. It ran something like this: 'Any person who likes this kind of a book will find this just the kind of a book he likes.' Well, that's about my idea of baseball; anybody who likes that kind of a game will find baseball just the kind of a game he likes.

"Now, they tell me that down at Robinson they've found an old wagon-wheel, cut the fingers off a pair of kid gloves, bought a wire bird-cage, and started a baseball club. All right. Let 'em. There are other wheels and more gloves and another bird-cage, I guess. Captain Perkins says he has a club, too. I've never seen it, but I don't doubt his word; any man with Titian hair tells the truth. He says he keeps it out at the field. From what I've seen of baseball clubs I think that's a good, safe place. I hope, however, that he locks the gates when he leaves 'em. But Captain Perkins tells me that he has the finest kind of a baseball club that ever gibbered, and he offers to bet me a suspender buckle against a pants button that his club can knock the spots off of any other club, and especially the Robinson club. I'm not a betting man, and so I let him boast.

"And after he'd boasted until he'd tired himself out he went on to say that baseball clubs were like any other aggregation of mortals; that they have to be clothed and fed, and, moreover, when they go away to mingle with other clubs they have to have their railway fare paid. Captain Perkins, as I've said once already, is a truthful man, and so I don't see but that we've got to believe him. He says that his club hasn't any money; that if it doesn't get some money it will grow pale and thin and emaciated, and won't be able to run around the salt-bags as violently as the Robinson club; in which case the keeper—I mean the umpire—will give the game to Robinson. Well, now, what's to be done? Are we to stand idly by with our hands in our pockets and see Robinson walk off with a game that is really our property? Or are we to take our hands out of our pockets, with the fingers closed, and jingle some coins into the collection-box?

"I'm not a baseball enthusiast, as I've acknowledged, but I am an Erskine enthusiast, fellows. Perkins says we ought to beat Robinson at baseball. I say let's do it! I say let's beat Robinson at everything. If anybody will start a parchesi club I'll go along and stand by and yell while they down the Robinson parchesi club. That's what Providence made Robinson for—to be beaten. Providence looked over the situa-

tion and said: 'There's Erskine, with nothing to beat.' Then Providence made Robinson. And we started in and beat her. And we've been beating her ever since —when she hasn't beaten us.

"I've done a whole lot of talking here this evening, and I guess you're all tired of it." (There was loud and continued dissent at this point, interspersed with cries of "Good old Tidball!") "But I promised to talk, and I like to give good measure. But the time for talking is about up. Mr. Hanson has something to say to you, and as he knows what he's going to talk about, whereas I don't know what I'm talking about, I guess I'd better stop and give him a show. But before I stop I want to point out a self-evident fact, fellows. You can't win from Robinson without a baseball team, and you can't have a baseball team unless you dig down in your pockets and pay up. Manager Patterson says the Baseball Association needs the sum of six hundred dollars. Well, let's give it to 'em. Any fellow here to-night who thinks a victory over Robinson isn't worth six hundred dollars is invited to stand up and walk out; we'll unlock the door for him. Six hundred dollars means only about one dollar for each fellow. I am requested to state that after Mr. Hanson has spoken his piece a few of the best-looking men among us will pass through the audience with small

cards upon which every man is asked to write his name and the amount he is willing to contribute to secure a victory over Robinson that will make last year's score look like an infinitesimal fraction. If some one will go through the motions, I'd like to propose three long Erskines, three times three and three long Erskines for the nine."

Anthony bowed and sat down. The senior class president sprang to his feet, and the next moment the hall was thunderous with the mighty cheers that followed his "One, two, three!" Then came calls of "Tidball! Tidball!" and again the slogan was taken up. It was fully five minutes ere the head coach arose. And when he in turn stood at the platform's edge the cheers began once more, for enthusiasm reigned at last.

Hanson realized that further speechmaking was idle and confined his remarks to an indorsement of what Anthony had said. The distribution of blank slips of paper had already begun and his audience paid but little attention to his words, although it applauded good-naturedly. When he had ended, promising on behalf of the team, and in return for the support of the college, the best efforts of players and coaches, confusion reigned supreme. Pencils and fountain pens were passed hither and thither, jokes were bandied,

songs were sung, and the tumult increased with the pushing aside of chairs and the scraping of feet as the meeting began to break up. But, though some left as soon as they had filled out their pledges, the greater number flocked into noisy groups and awaited the announcement of the result.

At length, Professor Nast accepted the slip of paper handed him by Patterson and advanced to the edge of the platform. There, he raised a hand for attention, and at the same time glanced at the figures. An expression of incredulity overspread his face, and he turned an inquiring look upon the manager. The latter smiled and nodded, as though to dispel the professor's doubts. The hubbub died away, and the professor faced the meeting again.

"I am asked," he said, "to announce the result of the—ah—subscription. Where every one has responded so promptly and so heartily to the appeal in behalf of the association, it would be, perhaps, unfair to give the names of any who have been exceptionally generous. But without doing so it remains a pleasant —ah—privilege to state that among the subscriptions there is one of fifty dollars——"

Loud applause greeted this announcement, and fellows of notoriously empty pocket-books were accused by their friends of being the unnamed benefactor, and

invariably acknowledged the impeachment with profuse expressions of modesty.

"Three of twenty-five dollars," continued the professor, "six of ten dollars, seventeen of five dollars, and many of two dollars and over. The total subscription, strange as it may seem, reaches the sum of five hundred and ninety-nine dollars, one dollar less than the amount asked for!"

There was a moment of silent surprise. Then, from somewhere at the left of the room, a voice cried: "Here you are, then!" and something went spinning through the air. The head coach leaped forward, caught it deftly, and held it aloft. It was a shining silver dollar.

"Thank you," he said.

The incident tickled the throng, and cheers and laughter struggled for supremacy. Jack pushed his way to the door, and remained there waiting for Anthony, one hand groping lonesomely in a trouser pocket where a minute or two before had snuggled his last coin.

CHAPTER XVI

JACK COURTS THE MUSE

April passed into May, and uncertain skies gave way to placid expanses of blue, whereon soft fluffs of white moved slowly, blown by warm and gentle winds. Down at the boat-house, bare-legged and bare-headed, men filed across the floats, bearing the slender, glinting shells, or, with hands on oars, bent and unbent in unison to the sharp commands of important and diminutive coxswains; on the newly rolled cinder-track other men sped or jogged, heads well back and knees high, with white trunks fluttering in the breeze; in front of the stand the jumpers and pole-vaulters plumped themselves into the freshly spaded loam; on the diamond, brilliantly green in its carpet of carefully tended turf, the players darted hither and thither amid the crack of batted ball and the cries of coaches.

By the beginning of the second week in May, baseball affairs had assumed a more encouraging look. The training-table had taken on six more men—among them

Showell and Clover—and the unsuccessful candidates had gone to the freshmen team or found other branches of athletics to interest them. Erskine had played eight games, had won six, tied one, and lost one. What was practically a preliminary season was well-nigh over and with the middle of the month the serious contests would begin.

Meanwhile, Jack had found himself. After a vicarious existence as a general outfield substitute, he had settled down as substitute second-baseman, a position which he had never attempted hitherto, but one which he took to in a way that vindicated his right to it. He showed that he possessed the three essentials of a good second-baseman: coolness, quickness, and judgment. With the exception of third base, second is the most difficult of the infield positions; it has been called the "keystone of the infield," and that very aptly. So far as handling the ball is concerned—that is, catching, stopping, or throwing—second-baseman has no harder work than shortstop or third-baseman; it is in studying the batsman that he encounters his difficulties.

Jack started in with a good knowledge of the fundamentals of baseball and took kindly to coaching. Gradually he acquired the intuitive sense which enabled him to tell where the ball was going before it had

left the bat, and to govern himself accordingly. He learned that a nine's success depends upon team-work and not upon individual brilliancy, and to control his zeal; to anticipate the shortstop's movements and to know, without looking, where that player and the third-baseman were; to keep always in mind that the best policy is to put out the runner nearest home; and much more besides.

With a definite position to try for, Jack found it much easier to put every effort into playing. Even the fact that "Wally" Stiles, the first choice for second-baseman, would in all likelihood play out the big games, those with Harvard, Artmouth, and Robinson, did not trouble him. There would be other games which, if less important, were well worth winning, and in those he would probably take part.

So Jack put his whole mind into learning his position, studying its possibilities, developing an eighth sense, which enabled him time and again to judge almost with exactitude in what direction, and how far, the ball, scarcely away from the bat, was going, and learning, too, to "size up" a batsman's prowess from the way he stood and looked and swung his stick. I have said that he possessed a good knowledge of the fundamentals of the game when he started in; but there were still things to learn which his baseball education had not

taught, such little niceties as stopping grounders with his feet together so that, in case of a miss, the ball could not go between his legs, and, after catching or stopping a ball, to start at once toward the point whither the ball was to be thrown instead of standing still, so that by the time he had gathered himself for the throw the distance for the ball to travel had been lessened; little things these, but of the sort that win or lose a game.

One thing that had a deal to do with Jack's ability to put his heart into his work on the diamond was the attitude of the other players toward him. Had the old scarcely concealed contempt and dislike been manifested he could never have shown up as varsity material. But that was past. In the minds of most of the fellows time had dimmed the memory of the incident at the river, now nearly three months ago, and Jack's attitude and behavior of late had aided.

For a while the neutrality observed by Gilberth made him suspicious that the pitcher was only husbanding his powers of annoyance in order to indulge in some more than usually brutal expression of contempt. But, as time went by, Jack was forced to conclude that hostilities from that source were over. At length, the neutrality was succeeded by a show of friendliness. It was impossible to practise together day after day with-

out an occasional word or two, and Jack and Tracy soon found themselves in the habit of greeting each other when they met, very ceremoniously, to be sure, and of sometimes exchanging observations on the bench much after the manner of slight acquaintances who find themselves thrown together at a party. Jack was very glad. The old thirst for vengeance on his enemies had wasted perceptibly under the influence of congenial companionship, and he was ready to cry quits. Just what Tracy's sentiments were at this time it is hard to say; it is doubtful if he knew himself.

He had made up his mind to let Jack alone, and was doing it. Only one thing troubled him, and that was the fear that Anthony Tidball might think that his course was the result of the other's threats. And it is only fair to state on behalf of Tracy's physical courage that such was not the case. Joe Perkins's remonstrances had borne weight, and when, shortly after Anthony's visit, Professor White had added his request, Tracy had decided that, after all, he had possibly mistaken the sentiment of the college. Professor White had said to him very much the same things that Joe had said, but he had put them more convincingly. He knew Tracy, and did not make the mistake of ruffling his temper; on the contrary, when he had left, Tracy felt that there was one person at Erskine who under-

stood him. And for the sake of that person and of Joe he would do as they asked him.

Professor White's efforts in Jack's behalf were not limited to the talk with Tracy. He saw Joe Perkins and Hanson and King and several others with whom Jack came in daily contact and asked for the boy fair treatment. And he encouraged Jack to visit him and, when the latter did so, used every effort to hearten him. On the whole, it is safe to say that to the professor belonged a greater part of the credit for the betterment of the boy's condition. Such was the state of affairs when, on a certain Saturday evening, about the middle of the month, Jack and Anthony sat talking on the edge of Mrs. Dorlon's porch.

Anthony had washed up his supper dishes and Jack had just strolled back from dinner at the training-table. The moon, well into its first quarter, was sailing in a clear sky over the tops of the elms in the yard. The evening was musical with the hum and whirr of early insects and the varied sounds from open windows. Somewhere farther up the curve of Elm Street an uncertain hand was coaxing the strains of Mandalay from a guitar, and now and then the faint music of a piano floated across from Walton Hall. Anthony had lighted his pipe and, with its bowl aglow in the dusk, was leaning against a pillar, one knee tucked up under his

chin. Jack sat a yard away, his hands in his pockets, staring up at the moon.

"Did you ever write poetry, Anthony?" he asked suddenly.

"No." Anthony sucked reflectively at the pipe and shook his head slowly. "No, I've had the measles and whooping-cough and scarlatina, but I've never had poetry yet. Of course, I've tried my hand at blank verse in Latin, but it wasn't poetry; even the instructor acknowledged that."

"Oh, I meant just plain every-day poetry, you know," Jack explained. "I thought if you had you could tell me something about it."

"Well, I didn't say that I didn't know poetry when I saw it," answered Anthony. "I've read a good deal of it, you see. What do you want to know?"

"I want to know whether you have to have all your lines rhyme."

"Depends, I guess. What are you going to do, anyway, turn into a poet?"

"No, only I thought I'd try my hand at writing some verses for the fellows to sing at the games, you know. The Purple says we ought to have some new songs for the Robinson game."

"Oh. Well, now, from what I've seen of such things it doesn't matter any whether lines rhyme or

don't rhyme, I should say. As long as the words fit the music the rhymes just hump along as best they can. Have you written anything yet?"

"N—no, not exactly," answered Jack cautiously. "I've got an idea, but I didn't quite know about rhyming. Of course, all the poetry you read rhymes all through, like Tennyson, or else it doesn't rhyme at all, like Milton. What I was wondering was whether it was all right to just rhyme now and then, you know, when you could, and not bother about it when you—you can't. What do you think?"

"Oh, I'd just do the best I could and not worry," answered the other gravely. "The—hum—sentiment seems to be the most important thing about college songs."

"Yes, I suppose so. It's funny how few rhymes there are when you come to look for them," said Jack thoughtfully. "Now there's 'purple'; I can't find anything to rhyme with that."

"Purple? Now that does sound difficult. Let's see; I guess 'turtle' wouldn't do, eh?"

"I'm afraid not. I've tried everything. I thought maybe it wouldn't matter if it didn't rhyme."

"Don't believe it will. Let's hear what you got."

"Oh, it isn't anything much," answered Jack

modestly. "It—it goes to the tune of 'Hail, Columbia!' you know."

"All right; sing it if you'd rather."

"I can't sing; I'll just say it. It—it begins like this:

Hail to Erskine, conq'ring band!
Firm together we will stand!
While the battle rages high
We will fight until the last!
Underneath the purple banner we
Will live or die for victory!

What—what do you think of it?"

"Well, if you want my honest opinion," replied Anthony, "I think it's too classic, Jack. Seems to me what you want in those kind of songs is a lot of 'rah, rah, hullabaloo!' And I don't believe 'Hail, Columbia!' is a good tune; seems too jerky. Course, I'm not an authority, and maybe I'm mistaken. But if I were you I'd try again; get more swing into it. I've always thought 'John Brown's Body' was the best tune to set football songs and such things to. Of course, it's older than the hills and has been used by every college from Maine to Mexico, but that doesn't matter if you get some good words. I'd forget about the rhymes at first; just find some lines that'll swing along, you know; kind of sing themselves; afterward, you can go back and tuck a rhyme in here and there. Try it."

"I guess I will. I wasn't just satisfied with that 'Hail, Columbia!' one, but I didn't know what ailed it. I thought maybe it was because I couldn't find a rhyme for 'high.' There was 'die,' but I'd used that in the last line, you see."

"I see." Anthony knocked the ashes from his pipe and stretched himself. "Guess I'll have to go up and do some studying," he said.

"Wait a minute," Jack pleaded. "There's another thing I wanted to ask about. Is it hard to learn to swim?"

"Never learned, Jack, and can't say from experience. But from what I've seen I'd say it was blamed hard."

"Never learned! But I thought——"

"It was like this with me. When I was about knee high to a grasshopper I went in wading and saw my daddy out in a dory about fifty feet from shore. So I went out to him. They say I didn't have much breath left when they pulled me in; I don't remember. I guess I swam, though; if I didn't I don't know how I got there. Anyhow, after that I knew how all right."

"Just imagine," mused Jack. "I know I couldn't do that, but I do want to learn. Do you think I could?"

"Course you could, but I guess it would take time. If you want me to help, I'll do it."

"Will you, really?" exclaimed the other. "Glory! that will be fine! I wanted to ask you, but didn't quite like to; I've been so much of a bother to you already."

"Oh, get out. We'll go down to the river and find a place where it's not too deep; I think I know of one. The water'll be plaguy cold, though, this early. Want to wait a while longer?"

"No, I want to begin right off—before my courage fail me; you know, I'm an awful fool about water, Anthony."

"Because you don't understand it. Water won't hurt you if you know what to do."

"And you won't mind if—if I'm a bit scary at first?"

"No, I won't mind. If you say you want me to teach you to swim, I'll do it if I have to throw you in the water and hold you there. Do you?"

Jack took a long breath and looked hard at Anthony's face in the moonlight. What he saw evidently reassured him, for after a pause he said faintly:

"Y—yes!"

CHAPTER XVII

ERSKINE *vs.* HARVARD

THE nine took its first long trip when it journeyed to Cambridge and played Harvard in a warm drizzle of rain that made the ball slippery and hard to hold, and set the players to steaming like so many tea-kettles. Erskine met her second defeat of the season that afternoon. She had an attack of the stage-fright usual to the teams of lesser colleges when confronting those of the "big four," and it lasted until the fifth inning, when, with the score 9 to 0 in her favor, Harvard's pitcher slumped and allowed the bases to fill for the first time during the contest.

Erskine awakened, then, to the fact that her opponents were only human beings, after all, and not supernatural personages protected by the gods, a fact which Hanson had been seeking to convince them of all day long, but without success. With bases full, one man out, and Bissell at bat, there seemed no reason why

the Purple should not place a tally in her empty column. This was evidently the view that Bissell himself took, for after having two strikes and two balls called on him, he found what he wanted and drove it hard and straight between first and second. Gilberth scored, but Billings was caught out at the plate. Motter reached third and Bissell went to second. Hanson whispered to Lowe as he selected his bat. Harvard shortened field.

"Last man!" called the crimson-legged first-baseman.

"Last man!" echoed the shortstop.

Lowe's first attempt at a bunt missed fire and the umpire called a strike on him. Then came two balls, each an enticing and deceptive drop. Lowe was the last man on the batting list, but if he wasn't much of a hitter he at least was capable of obeying orders. He watched the balls go by in a disinterested manner that was beautiful to see. Then came another strike, and for an instant his round, freckled face expressed uneasiness. The Harvard pitcher decided to end the half, and threw straight over base. Lowe shortened his bat a trifle and found the ball, and the next moment both were going toward first base, the ball very slowly, Lowe about as rapidly as he ever moved in his life.

It was the pitcher's ball, and the pitcher ran for it. Motter, at third, started pell-mell for home, only to stop as suddenly and dive back to the bag. But the pitcher knew better than to throw there, and as soon as Motter had turned he sped the ball to first. But he had delayed an instant too long, and the umpire dropped his hand in the direction of Lowe, who, with both feet planted firmly on the bag, was obeying Perkins's repeated command to "Hold it, Ted!" It was a close decision, but there was no reason to judge it as unfair, and the game went on with the bases again filled and Erskine's heavy batters up.

Joe Perkins stepped to the plate, gripped his bat, and looked over the field. Shortstop was covering second, and the infield was playing close. Out toward the corner of the Carey building the right-fielder was stepping back. Erskine's captain had already sent two long flies into his territory, and it wouldn't do to take risks. Joe looked with longing eyes upon a stretch of undefended territory behind first base and out of reach of right-fielder. If he could bring a low fly down there it was safe for another tally. But the pitcher had himself in hand again. He was more than usually deliberate and the first delivery didn't lend encouragement to Joe's hopes, for although that youth, staggering away from the base, sought to impress the

umpire with the fact that the ball had gone well inside of the plate, that astute, black-capped person called "Strike!"

The three or four hundred students who, with raincoats and umbrellas, were braving the discomforting drizzle, applauded. Jack, huddled between Clover and Northup on the bench in the lee of the west stand, sighed and took his hand from the folds of his sweater to beat them anxiously on his knees. Clover wiped the rain from his cheek and turned.

"We could use a home run, couldn't we?"

"You might as well talk about winning the game," growled Northup, who had overheard. "That pitcher hasn't given any one a home run yet this season, and you can bet he isn't going to present us with one."

"Ball!" droned the umpire.

"Well, I'll be satisfied with a hit," sighed Jack.

"You're wise," Northup answered with a grin. "There it is again," he muttered then, as Joe, reaching for an outshoot, swung in the air and stepped back to tap the plate with his bat and look exasperated.

"Say, doesn't that make you mad," asked Clover, "to reach for something when you know you shouldn't, and then get fooled? I'll bet Cap could bite nails now!"

But Joe got over his annoyance the next instant, and gave his attention to the ball. When it had passed he sighed with relief and silently gave thanks to the little red-faced umpire. It was now two strikes and two balls. Back of first and third King and Gilberth were coaching frantically:

"Two out, Ted! Play off! Play away off!"

"Run on anything, Teddy! Two gone! Now! *Now!* NOW!"

"With two Teds on bases," said Northup, "it seems as though something might happen."

"Two? Is Lowe's name Ted?"

"Yes, Theodore Coveney Lowe, Esquire, is the gentleman's full— *Hey!*" Northup was on his feet, and a second later the bench was empty. Ten purple-stockinged maniacs danced and shrieked over the sopping turf, waving sweaters and caps. Motter and Bissell and Lowe were racing home almost in a bunch. Joe Perkins was speeding for second. He had put the ball where he wanted it, well over first-baseman's head, and yards and yards in front of right-fielder; had placed it there as carefully as though he had walked across the diamond and dropped it exactly in the middle of the uncovered territory.

First-baseman started back for it, and the pitcher ran to cover first. But right-field was racing in, and

it was that player who reached the ball first and fielded it home just too late to catch Lowe at the plate. Then the sphere flew back to second, but Joe, hearkening to the coaching, slid across the brown mud and got his fingers on a corner of the bag in plenty of time.

There followed a pause in the progress of the game while Harvard's pitcher and her captain tried to convince the umpire that Lowe had not touched second base in his journey toward home. In that interim the little band of Erskine players and substitutes gathered together and cheered, with the rain falling into their wide-open mouths, until the Harvard stand applauded vigorously.

"Four to nine!" yelled Knox. "We can beat them yet!"

But King, with desperate purpose written eloquently over his face, went to bat and ingloriously fouled out to third-baseman, and the half was over. Erskine never came near to scoring again, although, now that the ice was broken, every man felt capable of doing wonderful things, and tried his best to accomplish them. The difficulty was with the Harvard team, and notably the Harvard pitcher; they objected. But if Erskine was not able to add further tallies to her score, she, at least, held her opponents down to two more runs, Gilberth pitching a remarkable game, and

what had looked for a time like an overwhelming defeat resolved itself into a creditable showing for the Purple.

Jack didn't get into the game for an instant, nor, in fact, did any of the substitutes. But, as he had scarcely hoped to do so, he was not greatly disappointed. After the game was over the team went back to Boston inside and outside a stage-coach, laughing, joking, cheering now and then, and, on the whole, very well pleased with themselves. Hanson didn't see fit to dampen their enthusiasm by reminding them of the faults which had been plentifully in evidence, but reserved his cold water for the next day. They had dinner at a hotel. In the course of the meal, King called across the table to Joe:

"I say, we've got old Tidball to thank for this feed, haven't we? If it hadn't been for that speech of his we'd never have had enough money in the treasury to buy sandwiches."

"I guess that's so," answered the captain.

"You fellows needn't think, though," cautioned Patterson, "that you're going to get this sort of thing every trip."

There was a groan.

"Put him out!" called Gilberth.

"Down with the manager!" cried King.

"I wish," said Jack to Motter, who sat at his left, "that I could take some of this dinner back to Tidball. I don't believe he ever had a real good dinner in all his life!"

"Guess you're right," Motter laughed. "Anyway, he doesn't look as though he ever had!"

Patterson distributed tickets to one of the theaters, and the men were cautioned to be back at the hotel promptly at eleven in order to take the midnight train for home.

"The management doesn't pay for these, does it?" Jack asked.

"Thunder, no!" answered Motter. "The theater gives them to us, and advertises the fact that we're going to be there; calls it 'Erskine night.' We're on show, as it were. Some of the Harvard team are going, too. You needn't fear that Patterson's going to buy theater seats for us; you're lucky if you get him to pay your car-fare to the station!"

Jack's experience of theaters was extremely limited, and he enjoyed himself thoroughly all the evening. The team occupied two big boxes at the left of the stage, while across the house the corresponding boxes were filled with members of the Harvard team. There was some cheering on the part of the Purple's supporters, but neither Hanson nor Joe encouraged it.

"Shut that up," begged the latter, once. "They'll think we're a prep. school!"

At half past eleven they got into a train at North Station and went promptly to sleep, two in a berth, and knew little of events until they were roused out in the early morning at Centerport.

CHAPTER XVIII

JACK AT SECOND

HALF a mile beyond Warrener's Grove, the wooded bluff at the end of Murdoch Street, the river makes in the shore an indentation which is known as the Cove. It is not an attractive body of water. At some time in the past there was a brick-yard there, and even yet the remains of two weather-beaten sheds and a couple of high troughs in which the clay was mixed may be seen. During a spring freshet the river went over its banks and flowed into the pits left by the excavations. Later, the water and the frost connected the stagnant pond with the river; rushes gained foothold in the clay bottom and the old quarry took on the appearance of a natural cove. Save in one or two places the depth is but slight, and, in consequence, the Cove offers warmer bathing in the spring than does the river. On the side nearest the railroad there is a stretch of gradually shallowing water that answers all the purposes of a beach. It was here, then, that Anthony and

Jack, during the latter part of May, came almost every morning, and, exchanging their clothes for gymnasium trunks, played the parts of teacher and pupil.

The first time that Jack found the cold water lapping his knees he went pale with terror, and would have fled ignominiously had not Anthony seized and encouraged him. In the end, he allowed the other to persuade him to remain where he was and, after gingerly splashing himself with water, watch his teacher a few yards beyond illustrate the method of swimming. Anthony realized that he had a task before him that required a deal of diplomacy, and he carefully avoided saying or doing anything to increase Jack's dread of the water.

After four lessons Jack had gone the length of immersing himself and, held tightly by Anthony, had essayed a few wild strokes with arms and legs. Anthony strove to teach confidence first of all, and it was not until Jack could allow him away from his side that Anthony set about the easier part of his task. As soon as Jack could struggle for a few strokes through the water Anthony taught him to float. And it was not until Jack could float in every possible position that the swimming lessons were resumed. Then progress was rapid. By the middle of June Jack could swim out to a rush-covered raft which had been

anchored about a hundred feet from shore by enterprising duck-hunters. At first Anthony kept beside him; later, they had races in which Anthony left Jack half-way to the goal; in the end, Jack found courage to swim to the raft and back by himself. But, as I have said, that was not until June was half over, and before that other things had happened.

It was on the fourth of the month, a Wednesday, that Jack, for the first time, played a game through as second-baseman. Erskine's opponents were the Dexter nine, a hard-hitting aggregation of preparatory schoolboys, and to meet them Hanson and Perkins put in a team largely composed of substitutes. This team, in batting order, was as follows:

Perkins, catcher.
King, pitcher.
Northup, right-field.
Mears, first base.
Weatherby, second base.
Smith, third base.
Clover, shortstop.
Lowe, left-field.
Riseman, center-field.

The last six, with the exception of Lowe, were substitutes, and before the game was over Lowe, too, had been replaced, Showell going in for him. Jack's playing that afternoon raised his stock fully a hundred per cent. He was in fine fettle—he had never felt better in his life than he had since he began his morning dips in the cold waters of the Cove—and covered the second of what Anthony had called the salt-bags in a manner

that opened the eyes of his companions and caused "Wally" Styles much uneasiness. His batting, too, was as good as his fielding; he had the honor of making the first hit and the first run for Erskine, and was the only man on the team that afternoon, with the exception of Perkins, who knocked out a home run in the sixth, able to hit the Dexter pitcher for more than one base. In the fifth inning his three-bagger was clean and timely, bringing in two runs and placing him where he was able to score a minute after on a passed ball.

Dexter made things extremely interesting for a while in the seventh inning, getting in two runs and filling the bases again directly afterward. It was Jack, then, who, in a measure, saved the day. With the bags all occupied, Dexter's catcher went to bat and lined out a hot ball just to the right of King. There was one out. King got one hand on the ball, but failed to stop it. Jack, who had run forward to back him up, found the ball in the air and threw quickly and true to the plate in time to put out the runner. Then Perkins, without more than a second's pause, returned it to Jack, who was again covering second, and Jack found the Dexter catcher two feet off base.

The game ended with the score 5 to 2, and of those five tallies two were opposite Jack's name. The other

three belonged to Perkins and Northup. Jack's record that day included four put-outs and five assists, and held no errors. Perhaps it was the consciousness of having done a good afternoon's work that put him in such a state of elation that composing verse alone seemed to satisfy him. When half past seven arrived and he had not appeared in Anthony's room, Anthony went in search of him and discovered him curled up in a ball on his bed, laboring with pencil and pad and flushed cheeks.

"I've got it!" cried Jack.

"Got what?" asked Anthony.

"The song! Listen!" Jack squirmed about on the creaking cot until he had his back against the wall. Then he waved his pad triumphantly over his head. "It goes to the tune of 'John Brown's Body'; you suggested that, you know; and I didn't have any trouble at all; and the rhymes are all right, too, I think! Now, then!" And Jack, beating time with his pencil, recited sonorously his verses:

'Robinson is wavering, her pride's about to fall;
Robinson is wavering, she can not hit the ball;
Erskine is the winner, for her team's the best of all;
Oh, poor old Robinson!
Glory, glory to the Purple!
Glory, glory to the Purple!
Glory, glory to the Purple!
And down with Robinson!

"Purple is the color of the stalwart and the brave;
Purple are the banners that the conq'ring heroes wave;
Purple are the violets above the lonely grave
Of poor old Robinson!
Glory, glory to the Purple!
Glory, glory to the Purple!
Glory, glory to the Purple!
And down with Robinson!"

"Fine!" cried Anthony. "That's the sort of thing! Let's see it." He took the paper and, turning it to the light, began to hum, then sing the words to the old marching song, nodding his head in time to the music. Anthony had about as much melody in his voice as a raven, but Jack, watching and listening eagerly from the bed, thought he sang beautifully, and was enormously pleased with the production. When the final refrain was reached he joined his own voice, rocking back and forth in ecstasy, and the concert ended in a final triumphant burst of mel— Well, no, not melody; let us say sound.

"Do you like it?" Jack asked, as eager for praise of his lines as any poet.

"Great!" Anthony answered. "And I should think it would do for a football song, too, wouldn't it?"

"Would it?" cried Jack. "Yes, I believe it would! That's fine, isn't it? Of course, I don't want you to think I'm stuck up, Anthony, but I really think

it's better than any that the Purple has published yet. What do you say?"

"Well, I haven't read many of 'em; should think it might be, though. Better send it in right off, so it'll be in time for the next issue, eh?"

"Yes, I'm going to mail it to-night; as soon as I make a good copy." Then, after a moment's hesitation: "I say, Anthony, would you mind copying it off for me? I write such an awful fist, you know."

So they adjourned to Anthony's room, and Jack leaned anxiously over his friend's shoulder while the lines were copied in the most careful of copperplate chirography, folded, sealed, and addressed. Then Jack bought a one-cent stamp from Anthony and took the letter to the post-office, marching back through the warm June evening humming "Glory to the Purple," and in imagination leading the cheering section at the Robinson game.

After he had gone to sleep he dreamed that he had been appointed poet-laureate of Erskine College, and was being driven along Main Street in Gilberth's automobile between serried ranks of applauding students and townfolk, his brow adorned with a golden fillet of laurel-leaves. The automobile was extremely spacious, since it held besides himself not only the faculty, but Anthony and Joe Perkins and the entire

baseball team. When he acknowledged the plaudits of the multitude he had to hold his laurel wreath on with one hand, which annoyed him a great deal. In the end the president solved the problem by tying it on with a red silk handkerchief. Then, at the moment of his greatest triumph, Showell arose from somewhere and shouted in a voice that drowned the cheers: "He didn't compose it! The writing was Anthony Tidball's! I saw it!" Jack tried to deny the awful slander, but none would listen to him, and he awoke breathless and despairing, to find the sunlight streaming in the end window and the robins singing matins to the early day.

CHAPTER XIX

ANTHONY TELLS A SECRET

"I WISH I'd never taken the captaincy," said Joe Perkins.

"Oh, rot! What's the good of talking that way?" asked Tracy Gilberth. "The nine's coming along all right. What if Artmouth did rub it into us? We had an off day; every team's liable to have them. Look at last year."

"I know," answered Joe, "we had plenty of them then, and see what happened! We lost to Robinson, seven to nothing; we scarcely made a hit! If I thought —if I thought we were going to lose this year, I'd—I'd cut and run; honest, Tracy, I would!"

"That'd be a nice thing to do, wouldn't it?" asked the other disgustedly. "Fellows would be proud of you, wouldn't they?"

"It would be better than losing again," muttered Joe.

"Oh, get out, Joe! Brace up; you're off your feed,

that's what's the matter with you. I heard 'Baldy' telling Hanson yesterday that you were going stale. He didn't mean me to hear it; but I couldn't very well help it. That's why you're out here with me in my 'bubble' instead of taking batting practise this morning."

"Oh, I know all that. A trainer doesn't send a fellow out for rides on Saturday mornings unless he's gone stale or has something else the matter. I suppose I am out of sorts, Tracy. And I guess I'd rather stay and take a licking like a little man than run away, but—" He stopped and scowled ahead of him at the dusty road. Then, "It's all well enough to talk about 'honorable defeat,' and all that, but it's mighty hard to lose your big game when you're captain and have worked hard and put your whole heart into it."

"Of course it is; I know that," answered Tracy soothingly. "But you're not going to lose. You're going to win. So buck up, old chap!"

"And there's poor old Tom Higgins," Joe continued dispiritedly. "What will he say? I promised him I'd win this year. He's coming up next week, if he can, to coach for a few days; I told you, didn't I? What'll he think when he sees how things are going?"

"Oh, Tom Higgins be blowed!" cried Tracy. "He

couldn't win himself, and I'd like to know what business he has finding fault with you if you don't win, either?"

"But I promised him——"

"Well, supposing you did? If you can't win, you can't, and that's all there is to it. Every fellow on the team is going to work as hard as he knows how; every fellow is going to stand by you until the last man's out. If we lose, it'll be simply because Robinson's got a better baseball nine. Cheer up, now, Joe, or I'll run this machine into the ditch there and send you out on your silly old nut."

The two were speeding comfortably along River Street in Tracy's automobile. It was ten o'clock of a fresh morning in the first week of June. They had left the village a half mile behind and were *chugging* along over a somewhat dusty country road with green hillsides to the right and the gleaming river to the left. Occasionally the fragrant air was sullied with the smell of gasoline, and Joe sniffed disapprovingly and made uncomplimentary remarks about motor vehicles in general, and Tracy's in particular. But Tracy, who had had his orders from Simson to cheer Joe up and bring him home in good spirits, refused to take umbrage, and declared that gasoline had a rather pleasant odor.

Joe was certainly suffering from nerves, and had been ever since the disastrous game with Artmouth,

two days before, when Erskine had gone down ingloriously to the tune of 17 to 1, the 1 being the result of good fortune rather than good playing. Perhaps, as Tracy put it, the team had merely had an off day; at all events its performance had been anything but encouraging to the supporters of the Purple, and had thrown Joe into the depths of despair. With the final game of the season, the contest with Robinson, but two weeks distant, he saw only defeat ahead.

They were in sight of the Cove now, and Tracy suddenly pointed ahead. "What in thunder's that, Joe?" he asked. Joe roused himself from unprofitable thoughts and looked toward the point indicated by his friend's finger.

"Must be a duck," he said finally.

"Duck be blowed! There aren't any ducks around here at this time of year. Perhaps— I tell you what it is, Joe, it's a man's head! See? Some one's in swimming."

"Queer place to swim, among all those rushes," Joe responded. "But I guess you're right. We can tell for sure farther on."

"Yes. Look; there he comes out. There's a sort of beach there, remember? He's walking out, and——"

"If it doesn't look like Jack Weatherby, I'll eat my hat!" Joe interrupted.

"Weatherby!" echoed Tracy. "What's he doing down here? He's at practise."

"No, only the first squad from ten until eleven; he's in the second. That's who it is, Jack Weatherby."

"Rot! It doesn't look the least bit like Weatherby to me. I tell you what, we'll go over and see."

"Can you get there in this tea-kettle?" asked Joe doubtfully.

"Sure; run in where the old bridge used to be; it's just a nice little jounce."

"All right, only remember that I'm not made of india-rubber."

That is why Jack, when he rejoined Anthony in the shade of the old shed near-by, reported uneasily that an automobile, with two occupants, was crossing the clay field from the road, and that it must be Gilberth's. Anthony finished dressing and then went to investigate. As he turned the corner a voice hailed him.

"Hello, Tidball! Was that you, for goodness' sake?"

"Hello!" answered Anthony. "Was what me?"

"The chap we saw in the water a minute ago. I could have sworn it was Weatherby," Joe replied.

"I was in there," Anthony said. "Water's nice and warm down here."

"Well, but how did you get dressed so quickly?" Joe went on, suspiciously. "Oh, you be blowed! It wasn't you we saw. It was Jack Weatherby, wasn't it?"

"Maybe it was. He's just dressing himself around the corner there." Anthony saw that further attempt at concealing Jack's identity was idle. During the conversation Tracy and Anthony had not noticed each other's presence save by perfunctory nods.

"Going back?" asked Joe.

"Yes, as soon as Jack gets his clothes on."

"Well, get in here and go with us, can't you? There's lots of room, eh, Tracy?"

Tracy nodded. He had not told Joe of Anthony's call, and his friend was unaware that relations between the two were somewhat strained. Joe wondered at the lack of hospitality displayed.

"Oh, I guess we'd rather walk," Anthony answered, smiling a bit behind his spectacles.

"Nonsense, you'll get in here, both of you, and Tracy will show you what he calls 'squirting through space.' Hello, Jack!"

Jack came into sight carrying the bathing-suits and towels and somewhat red of face. He feared that Joe and Gilberth had guessed his secret.

"Hello!" he answered. "Hello, Gilberth!" The

latter returned his salutation affably enough and Joe exclaimed:

"You're a couple of nice mud-hens, aren't you? Why don't you pick out a decent place when you want to bathe? Come on and get in; we'll take you back."

Jack hesitated and looked inquiringly at Anthony. The latter's expression gave no clue to his wishes, and so, in the end, Jack assented, and the two crowded into the carriage, and Tracy started back across the field toward the road. Joe seemed to have forgotten his troubles for the while, and the talk, ranging from baseball to final examinations, grew lively, even Gilberth finding his tongue at last. There was no hurry about getting back, he said, and so they crossed westward to the turnpike, and there, with a hard, safe road underneath, sped homeward at a rate that took Jack's breath away and made Anthony hold tightly to so much of the seat as he could find. They turned into Main Street at the Observatory just as the clock in the tower of College Hall, glimpsed over the tree-tops, indicated a quarter of eleven.

"I guess I'd better get out at William Street," said Jack, "or I'll be late at the field. Will you come along, Anthony?"

"Can't. I've got a recitation and I've already cut once this week."

"Once?" cried Gilberth. "Great Scott, I've cut four times!"

"Well, you'd better quit it, Tracy," Joe remonstrated, "or they'll be putting you on probation, and then we'll be beaten, sure as fate!" He turned to Jack. "Come to the room with me and then I'll go out with you."

"You're not allowed out there this morning," cried Tracy. "Hanson said I was to keep you away until the game."

"You can't," Joe replied quietly. "Besides, I'm feeling fine now, and it would give me the horrors to have to mope around the college while you fellows were enjoying yourselves."

"Enjoying ourselves!" Tracy grumbled. "You've got a queer notion of enjoyment. If you think I'm happy when Hanson is throwing it into me because I don't hold my bat the way they did when he was a boy, you're away off, Joe."

"Well, I'm going out, anyhow," Joe answered. Suddenly, just as they reached the corner of the yard, he turned to Anthony. "I say, Tidball, I wish you'd tell me what you two were doing at the Cove. I—I've got a reason for wanting to know."

Jack shot an admonitory glance at his friend, but

Anthony didn't see it; perhaps he didn't want to. He looked gravely back at Joe and replied:

"All right, Perkins, I'll tell you. I was teaching Jack how to swim."

"Anthony!" cried Jack, the color flooding into his cheeks. "You promised!"

"No, I didn't promise, Jack," he answered calmly. "I know you didn't want me to tell, but I think the thing's been a secret long enough."

Gilberth was frowning intensely and studying the clear road ahead, as though he expected a stone wall to rise out of the ground at any instant and bar his progress. Joe was looking curiously at Jack's averted face.

"King was right," he said softly. Then, "Why in blazes didn't you explain, Jack? Why didn't you tell the fellows you couldn't swim?"

But Jack only shook his head without turning.

"Pride," said Anthony. "Jack's full of it. I wanted to tell what the trouble was the next day, but he wouldn't listen to it." He reached around and placed one big, ungainly hand on Jack's shoulder. "He's an idiot, Jack is, but he's *all right!*"

Gilberth swung the machine over to the sidewalk, and stopped it in front of the north gate.

"You'll have to get out here," he said gruffly.

"I've got to take this thing down to the stable. You might as well stay in, though, Tidball; I'm going your way. So long, you fellows."

The automobile whizzed off again down Main Street, and disappeared around the corner of College Place. Joe and Jack watched it out of sight and then turned together and passed through the gate, bending their steps toward Sessons Hall at the upper end of the quadrangle. For the first part of the way neither spoke. Then Joe put his hand through the other's arm and bent forward smilingly until he could see Jack's flushed face.

"You're an awful fool, Jack," he said affectionately.

CHAPTER XX

STOLEN PROPERTY

Erskine met with defeat that afternoon.

Arrowden did pretty much as she pleased; base-hits were as plentiful as errors; the former were to the credit of the visitors, the latter were the property of the home team. When it was over, and the audience had clambered soberly down from the stands to shake their heads disappointedly over the showing of the Purple as they tramped through the golden evening back to the town and the college, Patterson, the manager, slipped his pencil back into his pocket and softly closed the score-book to shut from sight the obnoxious figures, 15—3. It had been a veritable Waterloo.

In the locker-house little was said. Every one realized that the team had taken a slump. Hanson stood aside, and "Baldy" Simson became the man of the hour. His was the task of getting the men back into condition, a task requiring patience and vigilance and all the knowledge that many years of experience had brought him. This was no time for fault-finding; on

the contrary, Hanson was silent, and "Baldy's" tone was cheerful and soothing.

The news of Erskine's trouncing brought delight to the hearts of the Robinson players and coaches. Down there at Collegetown they had been having troubles of their own of late. The brown-stockinged team was inferior to its last year's predecessor, and its coaches believed that if Erskine came to Collegetown in two weeks with a nine equal to that of the previous season she would win the dual championship. So it was that Erskine's defeat by Arrowden brought encouragement to Robinson; for Robinson had met Arrowden ten days before and had shut her out to the tune of 5 to 0. What pleased Robinson worried Erskine. The college at large, with last year's overthrow in memory, scented defeat. Hanson wrote four telegrams on Sunday. The tenor of all was the same; that to Thomas G. Higgins, captain of the defeated nine of the spring previous, read as follows:

"Need you badly. Come at once. Wire when."

Joe Perkins dropped a pound of weight every day until the middle of the week. Examinations were imminent, and this fact, with his own condition to think of and the worry caused by the general slump, came very near to making him quite useless on the diamond or in class-room. There was no practise on Monday

for those who had played against Arrowden. They were told to stay away from the field and rest. Joe moped in his room until Tracy called for him and again took him out in the automobile.

Jack went to second base that afternoon, and during the hour and a half's practise made a good showing. His throwing to first and to the plate pleased Hanson vastly. On Tuesday the first nine was still largely composed of substitutes. Joe and Tracy remained out and the battery was Knox and Griffin. "Wally" Stiles, the regular second-baseman, was out, but as he wore his every-day clothes Jack knew that the second bag was his for the afternoon.

Showell played Bissell's place at center-field during the fielding practise, and later, when base-running began, was selected to start the procession. He played well off of first in obedience to Hanson, and when Mears cracked a short grounder toward third base he was able to reach second with time to spare. Jack was standing just in front of the base-line, arms outstretched toward third-baseman, and Showell saw his opportunity to get even for the uncomfortable position in which Jack had placed him on the occasion of the mass-meeting. Lunging out of the base-line he struck Jack in the back with his left shoulder with all the force he could summon. Jack pitched forward on to his face, rolled over, and lay

there, feebly kicking the turf with his heels, and Showell flung himself on to the bag.

The nearest players ran to Jack's assistance and found him, white of face, gasping painfully for breath. "Baldy" reached his side almost with the first, and, kneeling above his head, he took his arms and "pumped" them until the air was forced back into his lungs. After a liberal dousing with water, Jack sat up, gasping, and looked about him. His eyes fell on Showell, who was sitting on the bag watching proceedings disinterestedly, and a wave of color swept into his face. "Baldy" lifted him and supported him for a moment while he tried his feet. Jack was angry clear through and wished that he and Showell were alone that he might have it out with him. But he said nothing, and only two or three near-by players knew that the affair was not an accident.

"Are you all right?" asked "Baldy."

"Yes," Jack answered. Knox handed him his gray cap and he pulled it down over his forehead again and went back to the bag. Showell eyed him sharply, evidently on the lookout for retaliation.

"You want to get out of the way," he blustered.

"You'd better keep out of my way," Jack replied grimly.

"Why, what would you do?" growled the other.

But Jack made no answer, save for a glance of contempt that brought an angry flush into the somewhat sallow face of the other, and the game went on.

After he had cooled off a little, Jack was heartily glad that he had not got into a fuss with Showell, for Hanson hated any approach to disagreement during practise, and was quick to show his displeasure by putting the offenders on to the bench for long terms of idleness. But Jack had the satisfaction of twice putting Showell out, once between first and second, and once between second and third, and of knowing that when the runner was replaced by another he had not made any too good a showing. In the locker-house Showell kept his eye on Jack, still not quite satisfied that the latter did not mean to resort to his fists to even the score, and saw Jack go out accompanied by Clover and Northup with feelings of relief.

The next day, Wednesday, Erskine played State University with a team still largely made up of substitutes. Joe Perkins was back behind the plate and Gilberth went into left-field, King occupying the box. But Motter's place at first was taken by Mears, and Jack again held down second. Knox was back at shortstop, but the outfield, aside from Gilberth, was made up of substitutes. The most encouraging feature of the contest was the improved condition and hard,

sharp playing of Joe. The rest, in spite of the fact that he had fretted continually under the enforced idleness, had done him lots of good. Erskine won, 5 to 0, and the students strolled back to the college talking more encouragingly of the nine's chances.

On Friday "Wally" Stiles got back into the practise and Jack, greatly to his disgust, retired again to the bench, or, to be more exact, to the net where Bissell was coaching a squad in bunting. Saturday's game was with Erstham, and before it was half over Jack was morally certain that unless Stiles improved greatly during the next few days the second-baseman in the Robinson game would be one Jack Weatherby.

Stiles, unlike most of the other players, had not recovered from the slump, and his playing that afternoon was deplorable. Yet, since Erskine took the lead in the second inning and held it throughout the contest, he was not replaced, Hanson hoping that he would find his pace before the last man was out. But he didn't, even for a moment. The team, as a whole, showed up strongly, and Erstham went home with a 10 to 2 score against her.

Jack was sorry for Stiles, really and truly sorry, he told himself; yet he would have been less than human had he not experienced a feeling of delight in the thought that, after all, it was not improbable that

he would get into the Robinson game. There was no certainty about it, of course, he reflected, for Stiles might, in fact probably would, take a brace on Monday, and, during the five days that would then intervene before the last contest, win back his title to the position. But there was ground for hope, and since Jack had hitherto never for a moment really expected to have a chance in the big game, that slender hope brought happiness. He went back to Elm Street and the sympathetic and patient Anthony, whistling merrily or humming "Down with Robinson," much out of tune.

His poetical production had duly appeared, among many others, in the Purple, and for several days he had been highly delighted. Each contribution had been signed with the author's name, and Jack had experienced not a little good-natured teasing by his friends. But there had been praise also, for his verses were better than the rest, and even Professor White had congratulated him.

Jack was discovering that he had a good many friends. Not many were intimate, to be sure, but all were apparently genuine. Joe Perkins had promptly spread the story of Jack's swimming lessons, and at last the true reason for the latter's failure to distinguish himself in the rôle of life-saver had become generally known. If the college had been quick to condemn, it

was equally prompt to acknowledge its mistake, and while few fellows made mention of the matter to Jack, yet many of them went out of their way to show him courtesy and kindness.

Tracy Gilberth had never mentioned the subject to any one since the truth had come out, not even to Joe. But Jack was aware that the varsity pitcher very frequently sought his companionship nowadays and seemed intent upon making up for the injustice he had done him. Jack willingly met him half-way, his olden longings for revenge forgotten in his present content. Nor, as has been said, was Tracy the only one who sought to ease his conscience by paying little attentions to the fellow he had formerly despised. From an object of scorn and derision Jack had changed into something approaching a hero.

On the Sunday succeeding the Erstham game Jack and Anthony were seated in the latter's room shortly after noon when Mrs. Dorlon knocked on the door and announced a caller, presently ushering in with many excited sniffles Professor White. The professor carried a newspaper in one hand and his immaculate silk hat in the other. He greeted the two and took the chair that Anthony promptly pushed forward. But remarks on the beauty and seasonableness of the weather seemed to interest him but little, and as soon as polite-

ness would permit he plunged into the subject which had brought him.

"Do you own a watch, Tidball?" he asked.

Anthony stared, shot a glance at Jack, and after a moment of hesitation answered: "Yes, that is—well, in a way."

"You have it now?" the professor went on. Jack scented mystery, and listened attentively, wondering the while why Anthony looked so uncomfortable. Surely it was no disgrace to borrow money on one's own property! Anthony hesitated again, then answered "No."

"Was it stolen?" continued the professor.

"Stolen? Well, now— But, look here, professor, suppose you tell me why you want to know?"

"Perhaps I had better," responded the other. "You're probably thinking me pretty cheeky and inquisitive. But I was reading the paper a few minutes ago, and saw that they'd arrested a tramp over in Gerrydale, and had found a lot of pawn-tickets on him. When they visited the pawn-shop and recovered the property they found among other jewelry a watch with the inscription—let me see." He found the place in the paper he held and read: "'Gold watch and chain; former inscribed Anthony Z. Tidball, from Henry Wright Porter—July, 1902.' That's your name, and I thought perhaps the watch was yours. Is it?"

CHAPTER XXI

OFF TO COLLEGETOWN

Ere Professor White had finished Anthony was on his feet with hands stretching forth for the paper. The look of delight which he had flashed across at Jack and which still illumined his face caused that youth much wonderment.

"Guess it's mine, all right," Anthony cried. The professor yielded the paper, and Anthony read the article through in silence. When he handed it back his eyes were dancing behind the lenses of his spectacles. "It's mine, sir; no doubt about it! The paper says all I need do is prove my ownership, and I can do that easily enough, for I have the number of the watch!"

"But, Anthony," Jack objected, "you said that you'd——"

"I'll go over to Gerrydale in the morning," Anthony interrupted hurriedly, shooting a warning glance at his friend. "I'm much obliged to you, sir; if you hadn't seen that and told me I don't believe I'd ever

have got it back; I don't read the papers very often myself."

"Well, I'm glad I saw it, Tidball. When was it stolen?"

"About a month ago," answered Anthony somewhat vaguely. "I left it in my room, and when I came back for it it was gone. Of course I never knew who'd taken it. But—I'm plaguy glad to find it again."

"Of course, especially since it was presented to you. What is the story, Tidball?"

So Anthony told the professor about the rescue at Jonesboro, making it sound very casual and far from thrilling. But neither of his hearers was deceived, and insistent questioning and cross-examining finally gave the incident a different aspect.

"Well, yes," Anthony acknowledged, "there was quite a sea running— Danger? Nothing to speak of if you knew how to manage a dory— The kid? Oh, he came round all right after a while; pretty near thing, though; another second or two would have finished him, likely. Father of the boy wanted me to take some money, but I wouldn't; a fellow doesn't take money for saving a life. So after he got home he sent me the watch. That's all. Good deal of fuss about it."

After the professor had taken his departure, insisting, for some reason, on shaking hands with the tall,

ungainly junior, Jack turned upon Anthony and began his questions.

"I didn't come right out, Jack, and say I'd pawned the watch," Anthony explained, "but I gave you to understand that. The fact is I didn't know what had become of it, and there wasn't any use saying it had been stolen as long as I wasn't certain about it. I left it in the room one morning when I went to recitation. I missed it in class, and came back, and couldn't find it. I guess the tramp found the door open and walked in."

"When was it?" asked Jack.

"Oh, well, about a month ago."

Jack looked thoughtful, and Anthony eyed him uneasily. At last Jack brought one fist into the palm of his other hand and jumped up.

"Anthony! Was it the morning I went off?"

Anthony hesitated; but the boy's face showed that he had no suspicion that Anthony had for a while connected him with the missing article.

"Why, yes, it was," replied Anthony.

"I thought so!" Jack cried. "I remember now that I saw a trampish-looking fellow on the street when I came from breakfast. I passed him. I didn't pay much attention, though, because I was—feeling sort of knocked out. But once I heard a noise in the entry

here while I was packing. I'll bet it was the tramp. And I remember seeing your watch on the table in your room, Anthony, when I took that note in there, and —why, come to think of it, I put the note under the watch!"

"He followed you in, I guess," said Anthony.

"That's just what he did. And when I went out he was in your room, I'll bet. And—and he took my money, too, don't you suppose? I must have left it out somewhere!"

"That's about what happened," Anthony replied, grinning jovially. "I wish you could get your money back; but I guess that's too much to hope for."

"I suppose so. Oh, I don't care now. But I am glad you're going to recover your watch, Anthony. Wouldn't it have been funny if I'd gone back into your room again and found him there?"

"Yes, but you might have got laid out!"

"Laid out nothing! I'll bet I could have whipped that chap. And I would have saved your watch, and——"

"Missed your train!"

"Yes, so I would have. I wonder if it would have made any difference? I fancy it's best the way it all happened." He considered the subject for a moment in silence. Anthony beamed across at him happily. He

was glad he was to get his watch back, but gladder still that the last doubt as to Jack's honesty was dispelled; and, oh, so very glad that Jack knew nothing of his idiotic suspicions!

"There's something I ought to tell you, Anthony," said Jack suddenly. He looked rather ashamed and apologetic and very serious. "I've thought of owning up several times, but—I never did," he continued.

"Owning up? Well—what is it, Jack? Murder?"

"No, it's—it's robbery!" Anthony stared.

"That morning I went away," he continued, "I—I took something of yours with me. It wasn't much, but I shouldn't have taken it."

"Why, what was it?" Anthony asked wonderingly. "I haven't missed anything."

"No; but then, I put it back afterward. It was a pencil."

"A pencil!"

"Yes, the green one with the rubber tip; the one you used to have on your desk. I—I wanted something to remember you by," he added shamefacedly. "And so I took that. I thought you wouldn't care. I was going to write and tell you when I got home."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" exclaimed Anthony. "I missed that pencil for two or three days, and then one morning it turned up again on the desk. But, hang it,

Jack, you were welcome to the old thing, of course! I'm glad you took it—glad you cared to remember such a silly old codger as I! Why, that was nothing; not worth mentioning. Besides, you gave me that charm, and fair exchange is no robbery!"

"I'm glad you don't mind now that you know," said Jack simply. And, after a moment: "When you get your watch back again you can wear that bean, can't you?" he asked.

"Well, I should say so!" replied Anthony with much decision. "And what's more, Jack, I'll wear it as long as the chain holds together!"

There was no difficulty the next day in recovering the watch. Anthony gave a detailed description of it, and explained the circumstances of the robbery, and his property was handed over to him at once. But it is needless to say that Jack's roll of money was not among the objects recovered from the pawn-shop, nor was it found on the prisoner. Anthony was told that it might become necessary for him to attend the trial and give evidence. But he begged off very eloquently, and in the end the police decided that perhaps there would be evidence enough to convict the thief without calling upon Anthony. And, as it turned out, the decision was correct.

Jack never learned that Anthony had for a while

suspected him of the theft of the watch; and it was better so. For while Anthony's suspicions were certainly justified by circumstances, yet Jack could never have seen the matter in the same light, and would have been greatly hurt had he ever learned of it.

In the second week of June two things began simultaneously, final examinations and morning baseball practise. Naturally, the first seriously interfered with the second, and it was only by the most complicated arrangement on the part of Hanson that the players were able to report at the nets during the forenoons for batting practise. Three assistant coaches had put in appearance in response to his telegrams, among them the captain of the unsuccessful nine of the year before. Higgins was a good player and turned out to be as good a coach. His heart was set on witnessing a victory over the Brown and he worked enthusiastically and tirelessly. Afternoon practise began every day at three-thirty, and never let up as long as there was a ray of light left. The slump was a thing of the past, and every man responded well to the demands of the coaches. Stiles gradually recovered his form, and in the last game before the final contest—played on Thursday with Harwich Academy—he superseded Jack at second, and Jack, his hopes dead, sat on the bench and tried to be philosophic.

That Thursday game attracted the biggest audience

of any thus far played; not because the Academy team was strong enough to promise a hard-fought battle, but for the reason that it was given out that the Erskine nine was to play just as it would in the game at College-town the next day but one. The batting list was as follows:

Perkins, catcher.	Knox, shortstop.
Gilberth, pitcher.	Billings, third base.
Motter, first base.	King, left-field.
Bissell, center-field.	Northup, right-field.
Stiles, second base.	

Allowing for the fact that every man had been worked hard all the week up to the very beginning of the game, and that examinations were in progress, the exhibition of ball-playing made by them was decidedly encouraging. The cheering was a notable part of the contest. Led by the senior class president and five assistants, the stands did heroic work, and cheers and songs thundered forth unceasingly.

Jack, sitting forlornly on the bench, wedged in between other substitutes quite as forlorn, found balm for his disappointed hopes in the fact that the song that went the best of any, and the one which was most often sung, was his. The way in which the throng emphasized the "Poor old Robinson!" was good to hear.

When the game was at an end—it was almost dark by then—the spectators marched back down William

Street to the college, cheering and singing all the way. Jack, trotting over to the locker-house in the wake of the other players, heard from down the street the refrain arising splendidly to the summer sky:

"Purple is the color of the stalwart and the brave;
Purple are the banners that the conq'ring heroes wave;
Purple are the violets above the lonely grave
Of poor old Robinson!
Glory, glory to the Purple!
Glory, glory to the Purple!
Glory, glory to the Purple!
And down with Robinson!"

The enthusiasm didn't cease until late at night. After dinner the fellows thronged the yard in front of Walton and the cheers and songs were gone through with again and again.

There was little work the following day for the players. Morning practise was omitted, and in the afternoon a little running and throwing to bases constituted the program. In the evening there was a reception to the nine and substitutes in Brown Hall, and again enthusiasm was rampant. The Glee Club sang, the college band played, the fellows cheered, the dean and Professor Nast and the coaches and Captain Joseph Perkins made speeches, and there was a grand hullabaloo until half past nine.

Jack bade good-by to Anthony that night, for the nine and substitutes were to go to Collegetown in the

morning on a train that left at half past six. The supporters were to follow on a later train, but Anthony was not to be among them.

"I wish I were going," he said, "but I just can't afford it, Jack. But I'll be down on the street in the afternoon, and while you're knocking base runs and such things you'll know that I'm flinging my cap for you here at home."

"It's little chance I've got," said Jack sadly. "But I may get on for a while, Anthony. Anyhow, I wish you were going along."

"So do I. Good night, Jack, and good luck to you and the nine and old Erskine. You'll play, of course; they can't win without you, Jack! Good night!"

CHAPTER XXII

AT THE END OF THE SIXTH

If you are so fortunate as to be occupying a seat in the stand running parallel with the line to first base, and if you are about midway between that base and the home plate, you may congratulate yourself upon being in the best place of all from which to watch the game. Under ordinary conditions you have a clear view of every player, the batsman, unless he is left-handed, is facing you, and the run to first base is made directly in front of you. Make yourself as comfortable as the narrow board seat and uncompromising back will permit, be grateful for the clear sky and warm sunlight, which, if it beats a little too ardently upon your cheek, makes up for it by limbering the joints and muscles of the players and urging them to their best efforts, and watch the game, prepared to applaud good work, joyfully if performed by your side, ungrudgingly if by the other, and to accept victory with gratitude and defeat with equanimity.

From where you sit you see first the Erskine players on their bench at the foot of the sloping stand, their purple caps thrust back on their heads or held in their hands. You can't see their faces, but their broad shoulders suggest the best of physical condition. Beyond them to the right a white deal table is occupied by four men who are busy writing the history of the contest.

At the feet of the players the field begins, a level expanse of closely cropped turf, which stretches away for a quarter of a mile like a great green carpet. Beyond the field is a thicket of trees, elms, chestnuts, and maples. Beyond that, again, the warmly red roof of the gymnasium peers forth, the forerunner of many other roofs and turrets and towers set sparsely at first amid the foliage, but quickly grouping together about the campus. There lies Robinson College. To the left, where the white spire pierces the tree-tops and glistens against the blue sky, the village of College-town commences and straggles away to a tiny river, no wave or ripple of which is from here visible.

But you have wandered far afield. About you the tiers are gay with purple flags and ribbons, but farther along to your left the purple gives place grudgingly to brown, and from there on in a long sweep of color the brown holds sway even beyond third base. Four hun-

dred among four thousand is as a drop in a bucket. Yet the four hundred is massed closely together, and every unit of it flaunts a purple banner, and is tireless in cheering and in song. Across the diamond the Robinson band plays lustily between the innings; you can see the leader swinging his little black wand, the cornetist's cheeks rising and falling like a pair of red bellows, the player of the base drum thumping away with his padded stick; but you hear nothing—nothing save an occasional muffled boom from the big drum; how can you when all about you cheers are thundering forth for *"Erskine! Erskine! Erskine!"* Your throat is dry and parched, the perspiration is trickling down your cheek, and your eyes are dazzled with the sunlight; but you're as happy as a clam at high tide, for the sixth inning has begun, neither side has yet scored, Erskine is at bat, and your heart's in your mouth!

Five innings without a tally doesn't sound exciting, and yet, if we except the second, every one of those five innings had kept the audience on the edges of the seats. In every inning save the second Robinson had placed men on bases, and at the end of each the supporters of the Purple had heaved sighs of heartfelt relief, finding sufficient satisfaction in the fact that the Brown had not scored. Only once had Erskine dared hope for a tally. That was in the third. The tally didn't come. It

had been a pitcher's battle, and the palm had gone to Vose, the tall, thin fellow whose spindle-shanks were encased in brown stockings. Not a single hit had been made off him, while Gilberth had been struck freely, yet had frequently managed to puzzle the batsman when a single would have brought in a run, or possibly two. When summed up it came to this: Erskine had been outplayed, and that Robinson did not now lead by several tallies was due to her inability to make her hits at the right time. The players of each college, in batting order, were as follows:

Erskine	Robinson
Perkins, catcher, captain.	Cox, first base.
Motter, first base.	Condit, catcher.
Gilberth, pitcher.	Hopkins, third base.
Bissell, center-field.	Morgan, shortstop.
Knox, shortstop.	Devlin, left-field.
King, left-field.	Wood, center-field, captain.
Northup, right-field.	Richman, second base.
Stiles, second base.	Regan, right-field.
Billings, third base.	Vose, pitcher.

At the beginning of the sixth inning it was anybody's game. Billings, the tag-ender, went to bat. On the Erskine stand the cheering died away and the purple flags ceased waving and fluttering in the still afternoon air. Across the diamond the band laid aside its instruments, and the shadow of the western stand crept along the turf until its edge touched the line

of white that marked the coacher's box. On the players' benches the men leaned forward anxiously and watched Billings thrust his cap back and grip his bat determinedly.

But it was soon evident to the watchers that Erskine was not to score. Billings hit a short grounder to first-baseman who scooped it up and tagged the bag before the batsman was half-way toward it. Joe Perkins had two strikes called on him ere he found the ball, and sent a high foul into the hands of left-fielder. He tossed aside the bat with a look of disgust and paused on his way back to the bench to whisper into the ear of Motter, the next victim to the deceptive curves of the merciless Vose. Joe crowded into a space between Billings and Tracy Gilberth.

"*I* can't find him," he sighed.

"No, hang him," growled Tracy, "he's too much for any of us. But I'll bet he'll let down before the game's over; and then—well, then we want to be ready, Joe!"

"Do you think he will? It doesn't look like it."

Tracy nodded knowingly.

"His arm's getting stiff. I know the signs. So's mine, for that matter, and I've pitched perfectly rotten ball, Joe!"

"Nonsense, you've done good work. But let me

know as soon as you want to quit, Tracy. How about the next inning?"

"That's for you to say," answered Tracy. "But I guess I can hold out through the seventh, if you don't mind."

"All right; I'll put King in for the eighth. Oh, hang! Come on, fellows! Out on the run!"

Motter had struck out, and was trotting to his position at first, drawing on his glove and looking wofully sad. The Robinson band struck up again, and the Erskine contingent, not to be outdone, started the cheers once more, while the purple-sleeved players spread out over the diamond.

Joe thumped his big mitten and Tracy picked up the ball. The umpire, a rotund little man in a navy-blue blouse shirt, ran nimbly to his position.

"First man!" cried Joe confidently.

The batsman was the Robinson captain and center-fielder, Wood. Tracy was not greatly afraid of Wood, and so saved his arm by pitching a few slow balls, none of which the Robinson captain was able to touch. When he struck out the Erskine cheers rang across the field. Richman came next. He was the first of the Brown's tail-enders on the batting list, and he followed the way of his captain, while the purple flags fluttered joyously.

Perhaps Tracy was overconfident, for when Regan, the enemy's right-fielder, stepped to the plate, he shook his head at Joe's signal for an outshoot, and sent a straight, slow ball over the corner of the base. And Regan got it on his bat and sent it arching in easy flight toward second, and raced for the bag.

"Mine!" called Stiles.

"Take it!" shouted little Knox, backing him up.

But Stiles didn't take it. Instead he let it slip through his fingers, and so when Knox had recovered and fielded it to Motter the runner was safe.

"Twenty minutes!" yelled the Robinson coach derisively. Then he began a desperate effort to rattle Gilberth. "On your toes!" he shrieked. "Go on, go on! He daren't throw it! Way off now! I'll look out for you! Way off! Now! *Now!* NOW!"

Tracy was disgusted because he had allowed Regan to hit him, and the shrieks of the coacher annoyed him. Earlier in the game he would not have minded twenty coachers, but now his arm was aching and growing stiff and tired and his temper and nerves were not so well in command. The next batsman was Vose, the Robinson pitcher. Vose was the poorest performer with the stick of any of his team, and in the natural order of things should have been struck out without difficulty. But this time he found the second ball that came to

him and hit it safely into right-field, and Regan took second. Then came Cox, the head of the batting list, and swung his ash wickedly while he waited.

There were coaches behind both first and third now, and their shrieks hurtled back and forth across the diamond. Tracy looked bothered, and Joe strove to hide his anxiety under a show of confidence.

"Next man, fellows!" he called cheerily. Motter took his cue from him and added his voice. "He's a goner, Tracy! Strike him out, old man!"

And for a while it seemed that Tracy would do it. But when the little fat umpire had called two strikes and two balls on him Cox managed to find something that suited him, and cracked it out past shortstop. Regan reached third, and, with two out, the bases were full. Joe and Tracy had a whispered consultation, while the Robinson stands hooted derisively, and then took their places again. Condit, the Brown's catcher, and one of the best batters, tapped the plate and looked as though he meant to bring in a run. The coachers kept up their medley of taunts and warnings, but Tracy had found his head again and paid not the slightest attention.

The first ball went wide, and Joe's brilliant stop brought forth a burst of applause. Tracy hurried up, apologetic, keeping an eye on the bases. "Sorry, Joe," he said.

"All right, old man," answered the captain cheerfully. "Now let's put him out."

Two strikes followed.

"Good eye, Tracy!" "Fine work, old man!" "That's the pitching!" encouraged the infielders. Then the batsman elicited laughter and applause from his supporters by crossing the plate and suddenly becoming a left-handed batter. Tracy looked surprised, and his next two efforts were pronounced balls. Joe leaned far to the left and squeezed his hands between his knees. Tracy nodded. But the batsman was an old hand, and was not deceived by the inshoot that followed. "Three balls!" cried the umpire. Everything depended on the next pitch. Tracy straightened his arms, swung his foot, and hurled a straight ball waist high for the plate. Condit met it with his bat, but failed to hit it squarely, and it went high into the air, and the men on bases raced toward home.

When the sphere came down it was undeniably second-baseman's ball, and Stiles stood ready for it. Regan reached home, and the next man, Vose, swung around third. Suddenly a shout of joy burst from the Robinson stands and the coachers were screaming like mad. Stiles had muffed!

Vose, with a coacher racing along beside him, sped for home. But Knox had seized the ball almost before

it had touched the ground, and now he threw it straight and sure toward the plate. Vose hurled himself forward when fully ten feet distant, and slid for his goal, but the ball was there before him, and Joe's right hand swept down and tagged him. The side was out. The Erskine players hurried in to the bench, and Gilberth picked out his bat.

It was the beginning of the seventh inning, but the score was no longer a blank; Robinson led 1 to 0. The band played wildly. Jack Weatherby, on the bench, felt a hand on his shoulder, and looked up to find Hanson speaking.

"You cover second, Weatherby," said the coach.

CHAPTER XXIII

A TRIPLE PLAY

The seventh inning began with Tracy Gilberth at bat. He watched Vose with interest while that lanky youth settled himself to his task, hopeful that at last Robinson's star player was weary enough to allow the opponents to hit him. But Tracy was doomed to disappointment. Vose's arm was tired, beyond a doubt, but he only took more time at his work, his curves remaining as puzzling as ever. Tracy struck out ingloriously, just as he had done pretty much all through the game. Vose was still on his mettle.

Bissell's fate was the same, while as for Knox, although he managed, by good judgment, to get three balls to his credit, yet in the end he too tossed aside his bat in deep disgust; and the nines again changed sides.

Robinson's first man up was the redoubtable Hopkins; he had gained the sobriquet of "Hard-hitting Hopkins" last season. So far to-day, while he had

managed to find Tracy rather frequently, his hits had netted little. But Tracy judged discretion the better part of valor, and deliberately gave Hopkins his base, while the purple-decked stands hooted loudly. Having given the other his base, Tracy next tried to take it away from him, but Hopkins was quick on his feet and time and again Motter got the ball too late to tag him out. Tracy gave it up finally, and turned his attention to the next batsman, Morgan.

Morgan popped a foul to the foot of the stand, and Joe, hurling aside his mask, got it after a brilliant sprint of twenty yards. Devlin struck out and Hopkins stole second. The Brown's captain came to the plate with determination to do great deeds written large on his face. After getting two strikes on him, Tracy couldn't put the ball over the base, and Wood walked to first.

Then, with two on bases, Robinson saw visions of another tally. But Tracy settled down again and struck out the third man, Richman, and again the Erskine contingent sighed with relief and cheered gleefully.

Jack, who during the inning had had nothing to do, trotted in and examined the score-book over Patterson's shoulder. He found that he would be the third man at bat, and wondered a bit nervously whether he would have any better success with the mighty Vose's curves than had his predecessor, who was now sitting weary

and dispirited on the bench. King, who during the first half of the previous inning had been limbering up his arm, was put in for Tracy, and Lowe took his place in left-field. Tracy sprawled himself down on the grass beside Jack with a sigh.

"I wish to thunder I'd been able to hit that dub Vose just one!" he growled.

"What's he like?" Jack asked.

"Like a Chinese puzzle," Tracy replied grimly. "When you try him, Weatherby, look out for his drops; they're the worst; they come straight to about four feet from the plate, then they go down so fast that you can't see 'em. His inshoots are simple compared with those drops. Watch for fast balls, and when you see one coming, slug it! Make him think you can't bat, Weatherby; it's your first time up, and maybe you can fool him."

"I'll try," Jack answered dubiously. "*Good work, King!*"

King was speeding to first, having made a clean hit to the outfield just over shortstop's head. The Erskine stand burst into wild and confused cheering. Northup selected his bat and went to the plate, and Joe Perkins, after whispering directions into his ear, ran to the white line back of first base and began coaching King at the top of his lungs. Vose settled the ball in his hands,

tapped the earth with his brass-toed shoe, and glanced sharply toward the runner.

"Play off, Greg!" shouted Joe. "He won't throw! He's too tired! Now, now, now! This time! *Look out!*"

King scuttled around back of the bag and reached it before the baseman swung at him with the ball.

"Hold it, he's got the ball!" cautioned Joe. "All right, now; on your toes. Down with his arm! He won't throw again!"

Vose looked as though he intended to, then turned quickly and pitched. The ball went wide, and had it not struck Northup on the hip would have given King two bases, since the Robinson catcher would never have stopped it. As it was, King, who was almost to second, trotted back and tagged base. The umpire waved his hand to Northup, and the latter went limping to first. King jogged to second, and the Erskine cheers drowned every sound for several minutes. Two on bases and none out! It looked like a tally.

Joe yielded his place to Motter, sent Bissell to coach King from third, and caught Jack on his way to the plate. He had to put his mouth to Jack's ear in order to make himself heard above the shouting.

"We've got to advance King, Jack," he said. "Wait for a good one, and make a slow bunt toward

third; you know the way, old man. Swipe at the first ball as though you were going to knock it over the fence! Then wait for what you want. Keep steady, Jack!" He clapped him on the shoulder encouragingly and sped back to first.

Jack's hope of rapping out a two-bagger was gone. Joe's directions were not to be disregarded, and it was a case of substituting team-play for ambition. He settled his cap, wiped his perspiring hands on his trousers, and gripped his bat. When he faced Vose he found that person eying him intently, appraising his ability as a batsman. Jack smiled easily—despite that he felt terribly nervous, and that the muscles at the back of his legs were twitching—and waved his bat forward and back a couple of times as though to say: "Right there, please, and I'll show you how it's done!"

Vose looked about the bases very deliberately, and then offered Jack an outshoot. Jack was glad that he had been told to hit at the first delivery, for the mere act of swinging his stick fiercely through the air eased his nerves. He struck at least a foot too late, and the Robinsonians laughed and jeered. Vose thought he knew his man then, and tried the same ball again, and the umpire shook his head and waved his left hand. Jack waited; two balls; strike two; then he saw what he wanted, turned a trifle to the left, brought his bat

around quickly and easily, and, as he ran to first, knew that he had succeeded.

The sphere, a new and very white one it was, went rolling toward third base just inside the line. King was making for that base, too, and the baseman indulged in just that instant of hesitation that is fatal. The ball was his to field, yet he feared that if he left his bag none would cover it. When he finally got the ball, reaching it a second before Vose, King was safe on third, Northup was sliding for second, and Jack had crossed first. He tossed the sphere to the pitcher, and the latter went back to the box scowling wrathfully. The Erskine stand was a bank of purple. The senior class president, bareheaded, wilted of collar and crimson of face, was standing on a seat leading the singing:

"Robinson is wavering, her pride's about to fall;
Robinson is wavering, she can not hit the ball;
Erskine is the winner, for her team's the best of all;
Oh, poor old Robinson!"

Billings went to bat. Motter was whispering instructions to Jack on first. Vose, calm of face, looked about the bases, while his support called encouragingly to him. Then, before his arm was well back, Jack had started like an express-train toward second. At the same instant King made as though to dash home, and Northup played off half-way to third. The delivery

was a poor one, but Condit stopped it, threw off his mask, and, bewildered, threw to second.

It was a costly mistake, for King was sliding across the plate before second-baseman had received the ball, and the Erskine fellows were hugging each other uproariously. Jack had flown back toward first, but halfway there he paused. Northup was caught on his way to third, and now was dancing back and forth with the ball crossing and recrossing above his head, and shortstop and third-baseman closing in on him every second. Then he stumbled and shortstop was on him like a flash, and he crawled to his feet to dust the loam from his shirt and trot off the field. Meanwhile Jack had made a good slide for second, and had beaten the ball.

The score was tied, there was but one out, and a man on second! Is it any wonder that Erskine's supporters went mad with delight and danced and shouted and threw flags and caps into the air?

When things had settled down once more Billings stepped back into the box. From behind him came imperative demands for a home run. Billings tried his best to accommodate his friends the next instant, for there was a loud *crack*, and the ball went arching high and far toward right-field. But when it descended the Robinson fielder was under it, and Billings stopped his

journey around the bases and came back. The left-fielder sped the ball home quickly, but not soon enough to keep Jack from reaching third.

The Robinson band had started bravely to work once more, but across the diamond the Erskine leaders had brought order out of chaos, and four hundred purple-flaunting enthusiasts were again cheering slowly and in unison:

"*Erskine! Erskine! Erskine! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Erskine! Erskine! Erskine!*"

And the cheers took on new force when it was seen that the Purple's captain was the next batsman. Joe had given a message to King, and now King was imparting it to Jack down at third base, and Jack was nodding back to Joe. Robinson's catcher, Condit, was badly rattled, and Joe knew it and was planning accordingly. The stands settled down into comparative quietude, and Vose, still calm and confident-looking, pitching the game of his life, faced his new opponent. The outfield came in a bit.

Vose's first delivery was easily a ball, and his second was undeniably a strike. Then followed an outshoot and a drop, neither of which did Joe take to. Back went the ball to Vose, and, with King shouting weirdly at third, he shot his arms overhead and

sped it again toward the plate. Then an odd thing happened.

The ball was a drop. Joe struck at it hard, dropped his bat, and flew toward base. The catcher, who had stopped the ball on the ground, stood up, glared bewilderedly, and then, concluding that it had been the third strike, threw to first-baseman, Vose shouting warnings which he did not hear. Jack, the moment Joe had struck, had started warily toward home, and although first-baseman caught the ball and hurled it back to the plate in the next instant, he was lying above the base in a cloud of dust ere the catcher tagged him. Again pandemonium broke lose on the Erskine stand. The Purple was one run ahead.

Joe trotted back to the plate and picked up his bat, and Jack went to the bench, dusty, panting, and happy, to be hugged and slapped by the delighted occupants. There followed a pause in the game's progress during which Robinson's captain sought to find a rule that would put Jack back on third. But Joe's strategy was within the law, and presently the Robinson catcher picked up his mask miserably and the captain, disgruntled, went slowly back to his position in centerfield.

The incident appeared to have discouraged both the battery and the support. Vose took up his work list-

lessly, and in a moment Joe was walking to first on four balls. A minute later he had stolen second. Motter bunted toward first, and beat the ball to base. Joe took third. Vose was now plainly rattled, and a wild pitch became a passed ball, and Motter went to second, Joe, however, fearing to attempt to score. Then Lowe took up the stick.

Lowe bided his time, and had two strikes called on him before he swung his bat. When he did he found the ball fairly, and drove a terrific grounder into outfield between first and second bases. Joe jogged home from third, and Motter, his legs making a purple streak, sped like the wind to third. Lowe sat down on first and tied his shoe. Bissell went to bat, and was deceived by a drop that absolutely hit the plate. And right there the half ended, for Lowe tried to steal second, and was put out four feet from the bag.

There was joy in the Erskine camp. The score stood now 3 to 1. If her players could hold Robinson from further scoring the day was won. And, with King in the pitcher's box, it seemed that it might be done. Regan went to bat for Robinson, and stood there idly swinging his stick while the umpire sang: "Strike one! . . . . . Strike two! . . . . . Striker's out!" And then, to fill Erskine's cup overflowing with delight, King struck out Vose and Cox in just the same way;

and the cheering broke forth anew, loudly, triumphantly. And the ninth and last inning began with little Knox at the bat.

It would be pleasant to relate how Knox knocked a home run and how Erskine continued the performance inaugurated in the preceding inning. Unfortunately, that is impossible. Knox was struck out, King was thrown out at first, Northup made a base hit, but was left there a minute later when Jack flied out miserably to Vose. The stands were emptying themselves of their throngs and supporters of the rival colleges crowded along the base-lines cheering doggedly or ecstatically, as the case might be. King picked up the ball, Joe donned his mask, Motter thumped his mit, and Jack, at second, danced about from one foot to the other out of sheer joy. Near at hand Knox was grinning like a schoolboy, and calling shrilly to King to "Eat 'em up, Greg!"

"First man, fellows!" cried Joe cheerfully.

Condit stepped to the plate. He was pale, and looked an easy victim. But luck turned its back upon the Purple, for at his second delivery King struck the Robinson catcher on the elbow, and the latter took his base. Robinson's friends took courage, and their cheers thundered over the field. Then came Hopkins, the "hard-hitter," and swung his bat knowingly. King re-

alized that here was foeman worthy of steel, and was accordingly careful.

But Hopkins was desperate. He found the second ball, and it went flying toward center-field. Bissell failed to reach it in time to get his hands on it before it struck the ground, and Hopkins gained second, Condit going to third. Morgan followed with a slow grounder toward King. King fielded it to first too late, after making sure that Condit was not trying to score, and the bases were full. A home run would win for Robinson! A two-base hit would tie the score!

The brown banners flaunted and gyrated in the air, throwing strange dancing silhouettes upon the turf. The shadow of the western stand had lengthened across the infield. Back of the stand the sky was aglow with orange, while toward the village a golden haze filled the air.

The throng at large was silent, intense, expectant. Yet here and there sections of the throng still shouted, and back of the dense wall of spectators on the Robinson side of the field the band was playing. A cheer, undismayed yet faint, ran along the ranks of the Erskine supporters. It is hard to shout when your heart is throbbing away up in your throat. Devlin went to bat, his determined chin thrust forth and his sharp eyes sparkling from between half-closed lids as he watched the

pitcher. Joe Perkins half knelt behind him and held a big mitten invitingly open on his left knee.

"Steady, fellows!" he called cheerfully. "Play for the plate!"

His voice rang true, with never a quiver in it. Yet now and then his heart raced and thumped for an instant in a way that turned him half faint. Despite the tiny beads of perspiration that trickled down his face, he was livid, and the fingers in the hot leathern mit trembled and twitched. If he could keep those brown-legged players from crossing the plate the game was won for Erskine and his labors and hopes were crowned with success. If! He groaned as he thought of all that might happen ere the third man was put out. For the first time during the contest he was nervous; for the first time almost in memory he was frightened through and through. Then his gaze swept over the field and he saw Motter at first carelessly flipping a pebble across the grass, Weatherby alert and impatient at second, Northup shading his eyes with his hand as he stood motionless in right-field, Knox calling blithely to King as he slapped his hands together, and beyond, Bissell and Lowe, their figures throwing long, slanting shadows across the turf. Then King's left hand wandered carelessly across his forehead, his arms shot up, and Joe, reaching out, drew in the first delivery.

"Strike," droned the umpire.

Joe's fright passed with the settling of the sphere in his hands. The blood crept back into his cheeks and courage into his heart. Returning the ball, he eased his mask, thumped his hands together, and called confidently to King.

"That's the eye, Greg; once more!"

Erskine applauded grandly. Then followed two balls. The coaches were shouting like maniacs and the runners were set, like sprinters on the mark, ready to spring into flight on the instant. Joe signaled a drop. It came, and Devlin tried and missed.

"Strike two," droned the little umpire.

Again the supporters of the Purple shouted and waved their colors against the evening sky. King swept a glance about the bases, unmindful of the coachers' taunts, settled himself once more, and pitched. Devlin's body moved quickly forward, ball and bat met squarely, Devlin raced toward first, and the runners on the bases sprang away.

Out by second, Jack, on his toes, alert and ready for anything, heard the *crack* of bat against ball, and instinctively ran toward base. Hopkins, head down, started like a flash toward third. Then Jack's eyes found the ball. It was speeding toward him, straight, swift and well over his head. He stopped in his tracks

a foot or two behind the base-line, threw his hands high into the air, put his weight on to his toes, and then sprang straight upward until there was a good two feet between him and the turf. To the excited watchers it seemed that for an instant he hung there suspended, a lithe, slim figure against the golden sunset haze. Then the ball stung his hands, the throng broke into confused shouting, and—

"Back! Back!" shrieked the coaches.

The runners turned in their tracks and scuttled for the bases they had left like rabbits for their burrows. Jack, the ball securely clutched, reached second in two strides, and then, with a lightning survey of the situation, threw straight and sure to Billings at third. Condit, arrested ten feet from the plate by the coaches' warnings, had doubled back, and now was racing desperately for third base and safety. Six feet from the bag he launched himself forward, arms outstretched. A trailing cloud of red dust arose into the still air, and the ball thumped into the baseman's hands. The little fat umpire swung his hand circling toward the bases.

"Game!" he said.

The long ranks broke like waves, and the players were engulfed, then caught and tossed to the surface. Jack, rocking perilously about on the shoulders of comrades, looked dazedly yet happily down over a sea of

waving purple banners and upraised, excited faces, while against his ears beat the thunderous refrain of *"Erskine! Erskine! Erskine!"*

ERSKINE.	R.	H.	P.	A.	E.
Perkins, c.....	1	1	8	2	0
Motter, 1b.....	0	1	8	0	1
Gilberth, p.....	0	0	1	2	1
Bissell, cf.....	0	0	2	0	1
Knox, ss.....	0	1	0	0	0
King, lf., p.....	1	2	2	0	1
Lowe, lf.....	0	1	0	0	0
Northup, rf.....	0	1	1	0	0
Stiles, 2b.....	0	0	2	1	2
Weatherby, 2b...	1	1	2	1	0
Billings, 3b.....	0	0	1	1	0
Totals.....	3	8	27	7	6

ROBINSON.	R.	H.	P.	A.	E.
Cox, 1b.....	0	3	9	0	0
Condit, c.....	0	1	13	1	1
Hopkins, 3b.....	0	2	0	3	0
Morgan, ss.....	0	0	1	3	0
Devlin, lf.....	0	0	1	0	0
Wood, cf.....	0	0	0	1	0
Richman, 2b....	0	1	1	2	1
Regan, rf.....	1	0	1	0	0
Vose, p.....	0	1	1	2	1
Totals.....	1	8	27	12	3

Erskine.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	—3
Robinson.....	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	—1

Two-Base Hits—Wood, Hopkins. Triple Play—Weatherby to Billings. Bases on Balls—Off Gilberth, 3; Off Vose, 2; Off King, 1. Hit by Pitched Ball—Northup (2), Condit. Struck Out—By Gilberth, 8; By King, 3; By Vose, 13. Sacrifice Hits—Knox, Richman, Regan. Umpire—Cantrell. Time of Game—2.40. Attendance—4,000.

Weatherby sprang straight upward, two feet above the turf.

CHAPTER XXIV

WEATHERBY'S INNING

"Good morning, Mr. Tidball!"

Anthony, making his way briskly down Main Street, raised his head at the greeting, and glanced across the street. Professor White, immaculate in his Sunday attire of black frock coat, gray trousers, and silk hat, was picking his way gingerly between the little puddles left by the night's shower. Anthony returned the salutation, and waited for the other to join him. Then they went on together down the quiet street in the shade of the elms. The village seemed deserted. It was an hour after noon, and staid, respectable Centerport was dining on all the indigestible luxuries that comprise the New England Sunday dinner. As for the college —well, the college was at the depot awaiting the arrival of the 2.12 train.

"Going down to welcome the victors?" asked the professor gaily.

"Yes," answered Anthony. "And I guess you are too. Sort of late, aren't we?"

He produced his big gold watch, removed it tenderly from its pouch, and saw that it announced eight minutes after the hour. The professor nodded, and they mended their pace.

"You didn't go down, did you?" asked the latter.

"No, I wanted to, but couldn't afford it. But we got the news at Butler's by innings. We had quite a celebration all to ourselves before the rest of you got home."

"Didn't keep you from taking a hand in the bonfire last night, though, did it?" laughed the professor.

"No, I guess every one went out to the field. It must have been an interesting game, professor."

"It was. But it was rather conducive to heart-disease toward the end. We came pretty near to being outplayed, and a good deal nearer to being beaten. When Robinson had the bases full in the ninth and their left-fielder rapped out that liner—well, I shut my eyes and held my breath! I didn't see Weatherby make his catch; when I looked he was throwing to third. Well, it was great, simply great!"

"Yes, but I didn't quite understand what it was Jack did. If he hadn't caught the ball the other chaps would have made three runs, isn't that it?"

"Well, two runs anyway, three probably; you see, the bases were full, and that hit was good for a two-

bagger, I think, if Weatherby hadn't got his hands on it. It was a hot one, too, and 'way over his head. As it was, he put out the batsman by catching the ball, tagged second before the runner from that base could get back, and then threw to third and put out the man there. You see, a runner is required to hold his base until a fly has either been caught or has touched the ground. Well, Robinson thought Devlin's hit was a safe one; it surely looked like it; and every one ran. Then when Weatherby caught it they had to get back to their bases; but they couldn't. Condit was almost home. It was very pretty. Triple plays like that have been made before, but they don't happen very often. And then the difficulty of Weatherby's catch added to the brilliancy of the thing. Well, he'll be a hero now as long as yesterday's game is remembered."

"I'm mighty glad," said Anthony quietly. "Jack's had sort of a hard time of it, take it all 'round. I'm glad things look better for next year."

"Oh, he can have pretty near anything he wants after this," laughed the professor. "I'm quite as well pleased as you are, Tidball. There's one thing, however—" He hesitated. "We can't get around the fact that Weatherby's been largely to blame for his own unhappiness, Tidball. We're both friends of his, and we can afford to recognize the truth. It was his duty,

to himself and more especially to others, to put himself right. He should have explained why he apparently made no effort to go to the rescue of that boy in the river. It looked bad; I saw the whole thing, and to all appearances it was just a case of cowardice. I was mistaken; and I said what was in my mind, which was a still greater mistake. But don't you see, Tidball, he should have spoken up and said that he couldn't swim. None would have blamed him then. He had no right to allow others to misjudge him. Then, too, his attitude wasn't of the kind to attract friends to him. From what I can make out he appears to have taken umbrage because the fellows didn't seek him and make his acquaintance when he first came, and subsequently repelled every advance by his apparent indifference and self-sufficiency. It was—unfortunate."

"Yes, I guess you're right. But I can't altogether blame Jack, for I know just how sensitive he is. Sometime he'll get over it, but it's something you can't change at once. Wasn't that the whistle?"

"I didn't hear anything, but if you like we'll sprint a bit."

And they did, reaching the station just as the train rolled in, and the victorious baseball team and attendants descended into the dense throng of students to an accompaniment of wild cheers. For a moment the

players were swallowed from sight. Then they came into view again on the shoulders of privileged friends, and were borne to the three hacks that were to take them in triumph up to the college. Jack caught a brief glimpse of Anthony's tall form as he was borne, swaying and bobbing, across the platform, and waved a hand to him. Then, with the cheering crowd jostling and shoving about the carriages, the journey was begun.

Jack found himself in the second of the hacks, sandwiched between Billings and Knox. Facing them, on the front seat, sat King, Motter, and Showell. As they turned into the Square, the horses prancing excitedly because of the crowd and the noise, Jack caught a glimpse of the carriage ahead and of Joe Perkins leaning out to shake hands with the nearest of his admirers. There was no attempt at conversation between Jack and his companions. Even had the tumult allowed it they were all too sleepy and tired to talk much.

Training had ended for the season with the ending of the game. They had remained in Collegetown as Robinson's guests, and had been dined, and, later, had attended a performance at the little Opera House in company with their hosts. After that they had returned to the hotel, assembled in Joe's room, and chosen a new captain. The honor had fallen to King. There had been no dissenting voice. King, although

only a junior next year, was already a veteran player, having captained his school team before coming to Erskine, and having played two years with the varsity. Jack was pleased. He liked King better than any of the fellows who would be eligible for the next year's nine. And King, he believed, liked him.

Jack forgot the cheers and the singing and the enthusiastic throngs that filled the sidewalks and almost surrounded the carriage, and closing his eyes, leaned back and gave himself over to thought. In three days the term would come to an end, and he would go home for the summer, a summer which promised to be one of the pleasantest of his life. Anthony was to visit him in July for a week, and later, if all went well, he was to spend a few days in Jonesboro, and finish his natational education with surf bathing. Then, in September, Erskine once more. But what a difference there would be! He would return to college to find fellows not merely willing but eager to claim his acquaintance, to call him friend. The stigma of cowardice would no longer be placed upon him; rather he would be looked upon as a hero, as the one who had saved the college from defeat.

Already he had tasted the intoxicating draft of popularity. Ever since the crowd had poured on to the field the day before he had never for an instant been

allowed to forget that the college looked upon him as one whom it was a pleasure to honor. The time when he had read "Coward!" in each averted face seemed very dim and far. And yet the vindication of which he had dreamed then, a vindication of his physical courage, had not come. Well, perhaps next year——

He came to earth with a start. King had leaped to his feet, and was staring excitedly down the street. The tumult had changed from joyous cheers to cries of alarm. The crowd about the carriage was frantically struggling toward the sidewalks and above its voice sounded the pounding of hoofs on the hard road. Jack turned and looked. Behind them, sweeping down the narrow street between the fleeing throngs, swayed the third hack, the horses, frightened beyond control, plunging forward with outstretched heads. On the box the driver tugged vainly at the lines and shouted warnings to the crowd. A moment or two and a collision was inevitable.

Their own driver had heard and seen; the hack sprang forward, and King tumbled into Jack's arms. At the same instant Showell struggled to his feet with pale, drawn face, and, with an inarticulate groan of terror, threw open the carriage door and leaped blindly into the road. Over and over he rolled in the path of the oncoming team. Jack pushed King from him, and

in a moment was balancing himself on the sill, clinging to the woodwork beside him. Some one strove to get by him, and he pushed him back.

"Stay where you are," he shouted.

Then he jumped.

As he did so he saw dimly the crowd crushing back against the shops, panic-stricken, struggling for safety. He landed and kept his feet, and even before the momentum had passed had swung himself about, and was racing back down the street toward the motionless form of Showell and the plunging horses. As he ran there was no fear in his heart; rather an exultant consciousness of power; here was the opportunity to wipe out forever the stigma of cowardice.

"It's my inning at last!" he thought gladly.

If it has taken long in the telling, yet in the doing it was the matter of a moment. He reached the inert body of Showell, and, with desperate strength, sent it rolling toward the sidewalk. Then the horses were upon him. With a gasp for breath he leaped forward, arms outstretched, as it seemed into the path of death.

But brief as had been his moment of preparation, he had not misjudged. His clutching hands caught at rein and mane, and he was swept off his feet and borne onward. Then his left hand found a place beside the right, and with all his weight back of the bit and the

With a gasp for breath he leaped forward.

horse's hoofs grazing his legs at every plunge, he clung there desperately with closed eyes. For an instant there was no diminishment of the pace; then the horse's head came down, and Jack's feet again touched earth. Plunge after plunge followed; a confusion of cries and cheers filled his ears; the team veered to the left, and his feet felt the sidewalk beneath them. There was a crash as the heavy pole splintered against one of the granite posts of the college fence, and Jack, striking violently against something that drove the last breath from his body, loosed his hold and fell backward into darkness.

When he opened his eyes again, a minute later, he was lying, weak, shaken, and gasping, just inside the fence, his swimming head supported on the knee of Professor White. About him excited yet kindly faces looked down, while on the sidewalk the trembling horses were being unharnessed from the carriage. He strove to sit up, but the professor restrained him.

"Hurt, Weatherby?" he asked.

Jack stretched himself carefully, shook his head, and struggled into a sitting posture.

"No," he gasped, "all right; breath—knocked out —that's all."

"Well, sit still a minute." Jack obeyed, and closed

his eyes. About him were low voices and whispers, and his name being repeated over and over. Then he became aware of a sudden commotion, and opened his eyes to see Anthony pushing his way through the ring.

"I found him," he gasped. "He's coming right over. How is he?" He dropped to his knees at Jack's side, sending an anxious glance at the professor.

"Nothing broken; just out of breath."

Anthony seized Jack's hand and held it tightly, his broad mouth working yet unable to voice his words. Jack grinned up into his face.

"You're a sight, Anthony," he said. "You've gone and lost your specs. Help me up." The professor nodded. Anthony seized him about the shoulders and lifted him to his feet. Jack tried his legs tentatively, and found them apparently sound. Then he turned to Anthony.

"Showell?" he asked anxiously.

"He's all right, Jack; just stunned a bit from the fall."

"Take him over to his room, Tidball," said Professor White. "I'll send the doctor when he comes."

The throng made way for them. As they passed through, Anthony supporting Jack as carefully as though the latter were a basket of eggs, the crowd found its voice. Jack glanced into some of the faces

and read therein a new respect and liking. He dropped his eyes, the color flooding into his cheeks, and hurried on. The throng grew momentarily. In front it broke and parted, and Joe Perkins and Tracy Gilberth confronted them.

"All right, Jack?" panted Joe.

"Of course I am," Jack muttered sheepishly.

"All right, then. Up you go, old man!" Before he could resist he found himself on the shoulders of Anthony and Joe, with Tracy supporting him behind.

"Let me down, you idiots!" he pleaded.

But they paid no heed. The individual voicing of approval suddenly merged into a confused cheering that grew and grew in volume until Jack's remonstrances were drowned beneath it. He clung to Anthony's head, and tried to look as though he didn't mind, and only succeeded in looking like a thief on the way to the stocks. Of late, he silently marveled, he seemed to be continually swaying about on fellows' shoulders!

Near the museum the chaos of sound took form and substance, and Jack, still somewhat confused and dizzy, found that he was bobbing along in time to the loud, deep, and measured refrain of *"Weatherby! Weatherby! Weatherby!"*

(3)

THE END

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